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Welcoming Audiences with Visual Impairments to the Art Museum: A Study of the Meadows Museum of Art's *INsights and OUTlooks* Program

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Welcoming Audiences with Visual Impairments to the Art Museum: A Study of the Meadows Museum of Art's *INsights and OUTlooks* Program

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis document to my mom, my dad, and my brother. I would not be where I am today if it weren't for their love and support.

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This research would not have been possible without the guidance and support of the education staff at the Meadows Museum of Art. Dr. Carmen Smith was exceptionally helpful and welcoming. My research experience and the knowledge I gained from her expertise would not have been as rewarding without her participation in the project. I would also like to acknowledge Allison Bowles Davidson and John Bramblitt for their willingness to participate in my research; I cannot begin to express how thankful I am for their kindness and encouragement as I completed my study.

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Abstract

Welcoming Audiences with Visual Impairments to the Art Museum: A Study of the Meadows Museum of Art's *INsights and OUTlooks* Program

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This qualitative case study focuses on the efforts of the education staff at the Meadows Museum of Art as they planned and implemented *INsights and OUTlooks* – an inclusive educational program, meaning that it was designed for sighted and non-sighted visitors. Although this is an inclusive program, the study concentrates mostly on how it was designed to make art accessible to visitors with visual impairments. The researcher interviewed the staff in charge of leading the program, observed two program sessions, and attended staff meetings related to *INsights and OUTlooks* to gain a better understanding of how it functions.

Current literature (Andrus, 1999; McGinnis, 2007) within the field of art education suggests that staff at art museums should adopt inclusive practices as they design programs and exhibitions. This study explores the process of creating such a program, the tools and approaches utilized to make art accessible to visitors with visual

impairments, and the benefits of being inclusive. Research studies such as this one add to the existing but limited literature regarding inclusive programming in art museums.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

This study describes the efforts of the education staff at the Meadows Museum of Art (Meadows) in designing and implementing *INsights and OUTlooks*, an ongoing educational program created to serve visitors with visual impairments. My involvement with the Meadows Museum of Art at Southern Methodist University (SMU) began in May 2012 in the form of a summer internship. Throughout my internship I assisted the education staff in their efforts to create programs and spaces that were accessible to audiences with special needs. It was during this time that Carmen Smith, the Director of Education at the Meadows Museum, shared with me her idea to create *INsights and OUTlooks*. I became interested in studying this program because it appeared that Carmen wanted to create a unique program that went beyond a touch tour and that was inclusive of visitors with and without visual impairments. Through my graduate career I realized that research and studies within the art education field which focused on inclusive programs, meaning programs that serve the needs of both visitors with and without disabilities, in museums were lacking. The majority of the research was dedicated to touch tours and recommendations for creating programs for the visually impaired, but very few publications within the art education field mentioned inclusive programs and best practice for creating these. Some have advocated for inclusive programs within museums (Andrus, 1999; McGinnis, 2007), and I believed that focusing my research on *INsights and OUTlooks* would provide new and valuable knowldege to the field of art education regarding this type of programming.

For this study I observed the very first session of *INsights and OUTlooks* on November 29, 2012, and the second session of the program on January 31, 2013. After months of research and planning, the education staff at the Meadows decided *INsights and OUTlooks* would be an evening gallery series with blind guest artist John Bramblitt. During the program visitors with and without visual impairments were invited to join John, museum docents, and education staff for two hours as they went into a broad and in-depth exploration of a single work of art from the museum's permanent collection. The program is designed for adults 17 years of age and older, and offers sighted and non-sighted participants multiple ways to access and think about works of art through a variety of activities. By observing two sessions, I hoped to gain a greater understanding of how different techniques employed by the education staff to make art accessible to the visually impaired were being put into practice. Furthemore, I attended a debriefing meeting, which occurred after the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks*, intended to assess the successes and shortcomings of the first session. I was also present at a brainstorming meeting in which the staff prepared for the second session of the program. I attended these meetings to find out more about the process the education staff went through to prepare for the second session of *INsights and OUTlooks* and how these meetings affected said session.

CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How is the staff at the Meadows Museum of Art designing and implementing programming that makes art accessible to visitors with visual impairments? How are they

evaluating the successes and shortcomings of the program? If evaluations are present, how do these affect the design and implementation of the program?

PROBLEM STATEMENT

As museums strive to reach as many different audiences as possible, programs for people with physical and learning disabilities have emerged across museums in the U.S. in recent years (American Association of Museums, 1992; McGinnis, 2007). One of the earliest special needs populations to be served by art museums was that of visitors with visual impairments. The Metropolitan Museum of Art was among the first art museums to open its doors to visitors with visual impairments in 1913 by including touchable objects and braille during their lectures (Andrus, 1999). After the passing of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, other art museums, such as the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, created programs geared towards visitors with visual impairments (Albright-Knox Art Gallery, 1988). Although programs for the visually impaired have been present in art museums for quite some time, there does not seem to be much literature that documents how these programs were initiated or that describes the programs, and the literature that does exist focuses mostly on the nature of touch tours and visual descriptions (Axel & Levent, 2003; Perttunen, 2003; Smith, 2003; Snyder, 2003).

In recent years there have been several publications that encourage art museums to move beyond touch tours and find ways, other than touch, to make visual art accesible to visitors with visual impairments (Candlin, 2003; Candlin, 2006; De Coster & Loots, 2004). Just by visiting art museum websites, such as those of MoMA or The Metropolitan

Museum of Art; it is evident that museums are implementing programs for visitors with visual impairments that go beyond touch tours, but not much has been published about these programs. Furthermore, research has shown that visitors with visual impairments want to be able to attend programs open to the general public (Reich et al., 2011) and some art educators are advocating for inclusive programming and spaces in museums (Andrus, 1999; McGinnis, 2007). As museums continue their efforts to reach all audiences, it is important for museum staff to consider the needs and wants of specific audiences and how programs and spaces can be designed to meet these.

MOTIVATIONS FOR RESEARCH

I first became aware of what museums can offer visitors with special needs after a yearlong internship at the Dallas Museum of Art in the Family Experiences Department. During my time there I had the opportunity to work with adults who had learning and physical disabilities, with visitors possessing visual impairments, and with children with autism. However, it was not until after I began working as a special education teaching assistant at an elementary school in Plano, Texas that I became truly interested in working with this population. Being a Special Education Teaching Assistant at a public school was one of the most challenging yet rewarding experiences I have had so far, and while I enjoyed my time there I realized that my true passion lay in making art accessible to all. This led me to start thinking about how I could combine my love for art museums and my interest in working with the special needs population. The children I worked with at the elementary school undoubtedly inspired me as an educator and they are the main

driving force for me when thinking about how museums treat visitors with disabilities. It seemed that museums were being more proactive in creating programs that served people with disabilities, so I began to research this topic in greater depth during my graduate studies at The University of Texas at Austin.

My research and interests led me to pursue a dual internship at the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) and Meadows Museum of Art (Meadows Museum) in the summer of 2012, which focused on serving special needs audiences at both museums. While at the Meadows Museum, I discovered that the education staff was interested in creating inclusive programs, meaning that programs would be designed so that anyone could attend and participate in the program regardless of ability. Furthermore, the education staff was also in the early stages of creating *INsights and OUTlooks*, the first inclusive program at the museum, which would specifically welcome visitors with visual impairments. Researching this program presented a unique opportunity for me to grow as an art educator since it directly related to my interest in serving special needs audiences within the art museum setting, and also to further contribute to existing literature within the field of art education regarding special needs audiences and museums.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this investigation I wanted to gain an in-depth understanding of how *INsights and OUTlooks* was being created and implemented to serve the needs of visually impaired audiences. I decided to conduct a qualitative case study because case studies enable the researcher to concentrate on a specific event, groups, or individuals to gain a

deeper understanding of what is being studied (Gillham, 2000; Stake, 1995). Since qualitave studies are subjective in nature, researchers must use various methods of data collection to ensure that interpretations and the information given is accurate (Stake, 2010). This particular case study relied on observations, field notes, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis to give a holistic account of the how *INsights and OUTlooks* was designed and implemented.

For my first form of data collection, I utilized descriptive and reflective field notes to record my observations of both sessions of *INsights and OUTlooks* and related staff meetings I attended. My descriptive notes included details about what I saw and heard during the sessions and meetings, while my reflective notes included my personal thoughts on the programs and questions that arose from my observations (Creswell, 2009). I also gathered and analyzed public and private documents related to *INsights and OUTlooks*. These documents included marketing materials, website information, educational material given to visitors during the program, session outlines or lesson plans, research reports used to create *INsights and OUTlooks*, and e-mail correspondence related to the program. My last type of data collection came in the form of audio recorded, semi-structured interviews of people involved in the creation and implementation of the program. Conducting semi-structured interviews enabled me to modify interview questions as necessary and facilitated dialogue (Gillham, 2007). My interviews provided me the opportunity to gain information about what the staff believed to be key aspects of *INsights and OUTlooks* and what they had done to prepare for the program.

My role as a qualitative researcher was essential to the development of my study. As a researcher I was interested in portraying the education staff's beliefs about how to create programs for visitors with visual impairments, as opposed to bringing in my own beliefs about successful programming for the visually impaired (Stokrocki, 1997). However, the education staff at the Meadows Museum was interested in receiving my feedback regarding the first session of INsights and OUTlooks. For this reason I took on the role of participant observer and shifted between the roles of complete observer, full participant, and half participant and half observer depending on the situation (Yin, 2010). A further explanation of my role as particpant observer and the overall methodology of this study is explored in Chapter 3.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Accessibility/Access Programs—For museums accessibility is most commonly used when refering to creating a space that can be physically accessed by all people (whether they have a disability or not). In this study, accessibility refers to creating physical access to a space, and access program refers to any program created to make art both physically accessible and relevant to visitors with disabilities only (McGinnis, 2007).

Braille—A tactile writing system which enables people who are blind or visually impaired to read and write through touch. It is composed of raised dot patterns arranged in cells of up to six dots in a 3 dot by 2 dot configuration. Braille writing is often found in books, on signs, elevator buttons, and currency and has been adapted to write many

languages. Braille-users can read computer screens and other electronic supports through special software and technologies.

Inclusion—Inclusion, when refering to schools, is a philosophy that encourages the integration of all students into the general classroom regardless of their learning differences, disabilities, and adaptive needs (Andrus, 1999). It is used in this paper to denote museum programs and exhibitions that are designed to integrate all visitors regardless of physical disability, learning differences, or special needs, unless otherwise stated.

Large-Print Text—Large print text is used in documents to facilitate reading for visitors with visual impariments. The text is usually in 18 point font or larger, is bolded, and is in a sans serif font. The text also has line spacing of at least 1.5.

Multimodal or Multisensory Learning—For the purposes of this study, multimodal or multisensory learning will be used to refer to learning and teaching approaches that utilize more than one of the senses. This term can also refer to approaches that incorporate multiple learning styles and can be interdisciplinary in nature. In a nutshell, multimodal learning is learning that involves the use of a combination of different senses (Eardley, 2006).

Tactile graphic representations or tactile diagrams—Tactile graphic representations utilize raised surfaces and braille to represent any printed graphic material, such as graphs, images, maps, and diagrams. These are used to convey non-textual information to those who are visually impaired. These representations can also include tactile illustrations of artworks. These tactile illustrations are schematic diagrams

and do not represent the actual obejct in every detail. Instead, they use standardized tactile patterns to convey visual information (Axel & Levent, 2003).

Tactile reproductions or three-dimensional reproductions—These are reproductions of works of art designed to be touched. Unlike tactile illustrations, these can recreate not only basic composition and color, but also translate stylistic properties such as texture and brushwork. Museum staff create or obtain these reproductions when works in their collection cannot be touched due to scale or conservation reasons (Axel & Levent, 2003).

Touch Tours—These tours are available at art museums and galleries only for visitors who are visually impaired. They give visitors the opportunity to touch original artworks that are dispalyed in the galleries or an alternative space (Axel & Levent, 2003). A member of the education staff or docent usually guides the tour, but in some museums visitors can explore art on their own in the galleries (i.e., Metropolitan Museum of Art).

Verbal descriptions—Verbal descriptions are ways of using non-visual language to represent the visual world. For artworks, verbal descriptions include standard information written on a label, and a description of the subject matter and composition of the work. This kind of description enables people who are visually impaired to form a mental image of what they cannot see. In museums these descriptions are often read out loud and used during a gallery tour (Axel & Levent, 2003).

Visual Impairment—Visual Impariment (VI) refers to the functional loss of vison that cannot be fully corrected by ordinary presecripiton lenses. It occurs when one or more parts of the eye or brain that are needed to process images become diseased or

damaged and severe or total loss of vision can occur. There are different levels of visual impairment—moderate visual impairment, severe visual impairment, and blindness. The term low vision is sometimes used interchangeably with the term visual impairment (Seidman, 2003).

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is specific to the Meadows Musuem of Art, a private university museum, and the content of an ongoing program—*INsights and OUTlooks*. The program is meant to be an educational program that occurs every two months over an indefinite period of time, but this study focuses on the first two sessions of the program only. Furthermore, the Meadows Museum is a small, private institution located on a university campus and some of the resources available to staff at the Meadows Museum might not be available to other institutions. This study was also limited since I was only able to attend staff meetings that occurred after the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks*. It would have been ideal to attend staff meetings that related to creating the first session of the program; however, this was not possible due to time and distance constraints.

BENEFITS TO THE FIELD OF ART EDUCATION

This study has the potential to benefit the field of art education by providing insight into creating programs for visitors with visual impairments that are inclusive. As mentioned previously, the majority of the literature regarding art museums and visitor with visual impairments focuses on touch tours and programs that are created only for visitors with visual impairments; however, educators and visitors alike are advocating for

inclusive programming and spaces. A careful study of the conception of a program like *INsights and OUTlooks* could benefit the field of art education by informing the future design and implementation of inclusive programs for visitors with visual impairments and, perhaps, other disabilities. In addition, people at organizations like Art Beyond Sight have dedicated their time to creating a knowledge base regarding different tools and techniques that can be used to make works of art accessible to visitors with visual impairments. I believe this study can contribute to this existing body of knowledge.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

The remainder of this thesis is comprised of five chapters. To situate the study within the field of art education and understand its significance, studies regarding museums and disabilities as well as art for the visually impaired are discussed in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3 I elaborate on why I chose a qualitative case study as my research method and how my study was structured and conducted. Chapter 4 presents an in-depth description of *INsights and OUTlooks*, the two sessions observed, and the outcomes of staff meetings. In Chapter 5 I explore the themes that emerged from my observations, interviews, and documents collected. In the final chapter, Conclusions, I summarize the study and reveal my findings and suggestions for further research relating to art museums and audiences with visual impairments.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This review of literature is divided into three main sections that deal with issues of disability within the museum context and society at large. The first section discusses the issues surrounding society's past and present perceptions of disability and their effect on museums. Although my study focuses on how one museum is creating inclusive programming specifically for visitors with visual impairments, it is necessary to explore literature that has led museum educators to seek an inclusive approach when designing programs and exhibition spaces. The second section discusses literature written in the past decade about current trends in the field on creating access programs in art museums. This section is relevant to this study because it situates the results of the study within current trends in access programs at art museums. The last section gives a broad overview of museum programs for the visually impaired and the issues art museums currently face when opening their spaces to this population. This section is of particular importance to my research findings since it will inform my data analysis in Chapter 4.

Issues of Access and Social Perceptions of Disability

In recent years there has been a shift in thought regarding what it means to be disabled. However, prior to the 1960s, people with disabilities had limited educational opportunities, were seen as dependent beings, and were often institutionalized (Burnette & Lokerson, 2006). After the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, parents and other professionals began to take interest in improving the lives of children with disabilities, and studies in psychology demonstrated that people with special needs were able to learn social behaviors and academic skills (Burnette & Lokerson, 2006). With the passing of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, federal agencies and agencies receiving

federal assistance were required to provide access to their facilities and programs, and were prohibited from discriminating against persons with disabilities. Although a handful of museums were serving disabled populations prior to the passing of Section 504, it was not until this point that museums as a whole began thinking about how to serve disabled audiences (Kenney, 1980).[1] Yet, it was not until 1979, when the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) issued guidelines for compliance with Section 504, that museum staff felt an urgency to make their programs and facilities accessible to handicap persons (Kenney, 1980). However, literature of the time regarding museums and Section 504 revolved mostly around making facilities physically accessible to people with disabilities and did not discuss programming for this audience (Kenney, 1980).

Although society's view of the disabled had been altered in the 1960s, it was not until years later that people truly began to challenge society's perceptions of what it meant to be disabled (Blandy, 1991; Oliver & Barnes, 2012; Thomas, 2007). Prior to the 1980s, disability was considered a social construct and viewed under what became known as the functional-limitations model (Blandy, 1991; Hahn, 1985). Under this model lies the belief that individuals with disabilities must adapt to their environment, if they are to be successful and that disabilities are a medical conditions (Blandy, 1991; Funk, 1987). The problem with defining disability through medical terms is that it groups disability with medical conditions that require treatment and disability becomes something that should have a cure (Blandy, 1991).

[1] The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Milwaukee Art Institute were offering programs for the visually impaired. For more information see Anderson, 1956 and Andrus, 1999.

The functional-limitations model was challenged by individuals with disabilities who began to advocate for themselves and by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990 (Hahn, 1987). Congress found that "discrimination against individuals with disabilities persists in such critical areas as employment, housing, public accommodations, education, transportation, communication, recreation, institutionalization, health services, voting, and access to public services" and that no legal recourse had been provided to address such discrimination (American with Disabilities Act, 1990, Sec. 12101). In other words, individuals with disabilities were to be fully included in society. It was around this time that publications on the topic of disability rights and societal perceptions of disability became prevalent. Hahn (1987) and Blandy (1991, 1994) challenge the public's perceptions of disability by suggesting that disability should not be viewed in medical terms, but instead discussions of disability should take on a sociopolitical orientation. Although people have begun to move away from defining disability as a health issue due to disability advocates, it is still common today for people to explain disability as a medical condition (Oliver & Barnes, 2012).

Disability is defined by the ADA under what could be considered medical terms, however, a close reading of this act indicates that a model different from the functional-limitations model is necessary since it also points out that society can be a disabling factor (McGinnis, 2007). As many have argued, society should no longer view individuals as being the source of limitations; but instead, society needs to realize that the environment is the disabling factor (Blandy, 1991; Hahn, 1987). Individuals with disabilities should be treated equal to those without disabilities; therefore, all

environments should be equally accessible, physically and cognitively, to individuals regardless of ability (Funk, 1987; Swain, et al., 2004). In response to this, museum staff at this time was redesigning their spaces to "no longer disable visitors" (Blandy, 1991, p. 139). For example, in 1992, the American Association of Museums published a book that profiled nineteen American Museums and cultural institutions and their efforts to make facilities and programs available to the elderly and to people with disabilities. In this publication it becomes apparent that museum professionals were beginning to adopt the social model that Hahn (1987) and Blandy (1991, 1994) advocated. The staff members from the museums showcased in *The Accessible Museum* (1992) were not only interested in making spaces physically accessible, but also their programs. In the preface to this book, Pilgrim (1992) argues that the attitudes of museum professionals must change and that creating physical accessibility does not mean accessibility problems have been solved. Furthermore, Pilgrim (1992) advocates for creating programs that are inclusive of disabled audiences; and although the art museums showcased had programs for the disabled, only non-art related institutions such as the Brookfield Zoo and The Children's Museum in Boston, Massachusetts had fully inclusive programming (American Association of Museums, 1992). Also in this publication, Steiner (1992) calls museum professionals to redefine the word "access" and "to inject the field with new vocabulary, to evaluate methodology, to reexamine goals" (p. 13) in order to better serve persons with disabilities, an issue which museums continue to face in the 21st century. Based on the institutions represented in this book, it appears that access is not simply about

physical accessibility but also about creating intellectual, cultural, and social accessibility for everyone (American Association of Museums, 1992).

CURRENT THOUGHTS ON MUSEUMS AND DISABILITY

Museums Define Disability

Currently, the topic of disability is still widely discussed amongst disability activists and scholars. Changes in thought are still occurring and, as Rembis (2009) points out, disability has become an unstable category and a complex issue to discuss. Disability theorists are constantly redefining what it means to be disabled and who falls under this category (Rembis, 2009). The term "disability" has become:

> increasingly polymorphous…it can suggest a set of practices, kinds of embodiment, interactions with the built environment, an almost limitless array of literary types, frames of mind, and forms of relationships. Gone are the days of a simple and dominant physiological or medical definition of disability. (Smith Hutchinson 2004, as quoted in Rembis, 2009, p. 591)

For example, some believe disability does not only refer to physical impairments, but also to cognitive and sensory impairments (Oliver & Barnes, 2012). This "polymorphous" definition of disability and the need to find new ways to define what disability really is have made their way into the minds of art educators. McGinnis (2007) believes disabled individuals can include anyone that has a physical, sensory, cognitive, psychiatric, or other type of disability, whether it be permanent or temporary. Furthermore, some believe that museums can be a driving force to foster a new image of disability in which society is the limiting factor to people with disabilities and not the disability itself (Garland-Thomson, 2010; McGinnis, 2007; Sandell & Dodd, 2010). This

can be accomplished in several ways such as by hiring people with disabilities, staging exhibitions that challenge visitors' perception of disability, and including works by disabled artists or works that represent the disabled in a positive light (McGinnis, 2007; Sandell & Dodd, 2010). Silverman (2010) believes that museums are "promoting social change through exhibits, educational programs, special events, and other efforts that raise public awareness of social issues" (p. 19).

In the book *Re-Presenting Disability: Activism and Agency in the Museum* (2010), the authors make a strong case for the ability of museums to be sites for staging interventions that will elicit support for disability rights. For example, Sandell and Dodd (2010) believe that museums can collaborate with the disabled population to create exhibitions that challenge our existing notions of what it means to be disabled. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2010) argues that images of people with disabilities can be used to tell "positive stories, that show disabled people as valued citizens with meaningful and satisfying lives" (pp. 23-24), as opposed to people who have stories of suffering and who provoke pity or repugnance. And McGinnis (2007) believes that "through choices in collecting and programming, museum educators and curators…can harness the authoritative voice of the museum to convey images of disability that promote a positive social identity" (p. 139). All these ideas were tested at nine museums in England and Scotland that were included in *Rethinking Disability Representation*, a research project used to design and evaluate new approaches to representing disability in museums and galleries (Sandell & Dodd, 2010). Between 2006 and 2009, the staff at these museums created and exhibited materials that offered audiences new ways of seeing disability and

disability-rights by presenting different accounts of disability experiences which challenged stereotypes (Sandell & Dodd, 2010). For example, the Colchester Castle Museum had museum objects, personal testimonies, films, and artworks present at *Life Beyond the Label*, an exhibition that revealed the lives of local disabled people and prompted visitors to examine past and current perceptions of disability (Sandell & Dodd, 2010).

Current Trends in Thought and the Future of Museum Education for the Disabled

Although programs for visitors with disabilities have appeared in museums throughout the United States, it does not seem that much has been done to integrate this group into the museum audience.[2] Inclusion in the art classroom became widely discussed in the field after the passing of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 (Burnette & Lokerson, 2006). This act required that students with disabilities participate in the general education curriculum, including the art classroom (Burnette & Lokerson, 2006). A study of literature (Andrus, 1999; McGinnis, 2007; Reich et al., 2011; Shepherd, 2009) from the past twenty years that focuses on art museums and visitors with disabilities demonstrates that inclusion has made its way into the minds of museum educators. Andrus (1999) believes that the inclusion model followed by public school classrooms "could serve as a guide for a variety of creative programs and strategies to promote inclusion in the museum setting" (p. 84). Shepherd

[2] The majority of the programs for visitors with special needs found on museum websites and in newspaper articles are geared towards this population only and do not seem to be inclusive. There are only a handful of museums, like the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Dallas Museum of Art, which are implementing inclusive practices in their programs.

(2009) supports Andrus' view in her study of the development of one gallery at Thinktank, a science museum in the United Kingdom. She discusses the steps that staff of the Learning and Programmes team took to create an inclusive gallery space. In re-thinking their space, staff had to consider the different learning needs of visitors and consult with members of the community to gain a better understanding of what needed to change in order to make their gallery accessible to visitors of varying abilities.

Asking visitors what changes need to be made is a great way for museums to create inclusive programs (McGinnis, 2007). However, it has also been suggested that inclusive practices can be achieved through the use of Universal Design (Andrus, 1999; McGinnis, 2007; Reich et al., 2011). The concept of Universal Design came about when society was trying to respond to the idea that environments must be redesigned to fit the needs of disabled people (Imrie, 2004). Under this concept products, environments, and communications systems are designed to serve the broadest range of users possible (Imrie, 2004). When applied to museums, Universal Design would mean that exhibitions and programs would have to be designed so that everyone was able use them (McGinnis, 2007). However, it has been argued that Universal Design poses some problems because the needs of individuals are so varied and it would be hard to come up with a model that would provide access for all (Imrie, 2004). McGinnis (2007) offers a feasible solution to this problem. She suggests that instead of searching for one ideal model, art museums should consider the seven principles of Universal Design—equitable use, flexibility of use, simple and intuitive use, perceptible information, tolerance for error, low physical effort, and appropriate size and space for approach and use – and try to incorporate them

to programs or exhibitions (McGinnis, 2007). For example, exhibitions should present information in different formats such as, braille text, large print text, and audio. Furthermore, artworks should be placed so that children and adults can see them clearly and opportunities for tactile, visual, and audio exploration should be available throughout the exhibition (McGinnis, 2007). Including concepts of Universal Design in programs and exhibitions will provide all museum visitors with multiple ways to engage with and learn about art without having to make further accommodations for those who are disabled (McGinnis, 2007; Reich et al., 2011).

Inclusive approaches facilitate learning for all visitors and they help museums to open up existing "programs and services and to reach out to underserved communities in ways that promote human dignity" (Murray, 1992, p. 6). However, it must be noted that if museums are to be inclusive, cooperation from all departments within the museum is necessary (Candlin, 2003; Hetherington, 2003; McGinnis, 2007). Although museum educators can create inclusion in the museum through programming, making museums fully accessible requires that exhibitions and other public spaces within the museum be inclusive (Candlin, 2003; McGinnis, 2007).

VISUALLY IMPAIRED VISITORS AND MUSEUM ACCESS

Individuals with visual impairments appear to be some of the first persons with a disability that museum staff welcomed (Andrus, 1999). However, literature (Axel & Levent, 2003; Chatterjee, 2008; Pye, 2007) regarding museums and the visually impaired focuses largely on the use of touch to make exhibitions available to this population and

less on describing the successful, or unsuccessful, inclusion of this population into programs. This section of Chapter 2 deals with issues that have been unveiled throughout the years as art museums' doors have opened to the visually impaired. It also presents current thoughts on what art museum opportunities for the blind should look like.

History of Touch in Museums

Museums in Europe have welcomed visitors with visual impairments since the 19th century by providing objects that could be touched or handled (Candlin, 2008; Coon, 1953). Art museums in America followed suit in the early 20th century also through the use of object handling (Candlin, 2008; Coon, 1953). In 1913, the Metropolitan Museum of Art first opened its doors to visitors with visual impairments by including touchable objects and braille during their lectures (Andrus, 1999). The Albright-Knox Gallery's first programs geared towards disabled populations focused on serving visitors with visual impairments (Albright-Knox Art Gallery, 1988). The staff at this museum created a program, known as *Matter at Hand*, that was comprised of an exhibition of touchable sculpture and workshops in clay (Albright-Knox Art Gallery, 1988). Nevertheless, museums have received criticism for lacking spaces that can be explored independently regardless of ability and for creating programs that focus on a specific disabled group (American Foundation for the Blind, 1972; Rodriguez, 1984; Weisen, 1991). Rodriguez (1984) argued that Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act called for integration and not segregation, and the Art Foundation for the Blind (1972) claimed that specialized programs for the blind reinforced negative stereotypes and prevalent misconceptions. In

addition, Weisen (1991) pointed out that touch tours, while making some works of art accessible, did not allow visitors with visual impairments to explore the museum independently like non-disabled visitors were able to do.

Issues of Touch in Museums

In recent years, art museums have received criticism in both the United States and England since they are still seen as visual spaces that favor the sense of sight over other senses (Candlin, 2006; Hetherington, 2000). Candlin (2006) makes a strong argument for how the use of touch in museums is seen as a "lesser, substitute form of seeing" (p. 137) since it is mainly used by museums during access programs and not as a mainstream option for teaching. There is a demand for museum educators to re-think how they make use of the sense of touch in access initiatives for the visually impaired and find ways to merge touch and sight so that they are equals and not alternatives to one another; however, there does not seem to be any literature that illustrates how this can or has been accomplished within art museums (Candlin, 2003, 2006; De Coster & Loots, 2004; Hetherington, 2000). When touch is used in museums, it should be employed purposefully and not simply as a "substitute or accessory for seeing" (Hetherington, 2000, p. 445). Furthermore, museums that offer touch tours should make an effort to understand how people enjoy works of art through touch (Candlin, 2003, 2006). Despite the difficulties behind the use of touch in museums, incorporating this sense in programs and exhibitions is significant since many authors who have criticized how museums use touch have also emphasized that tactile experiences in museums have a positive impact

on visitors with visual impairments (Asensio & Simon, 1996; Buyurgan, 2009; Candlin, 2003; Hetherington, 2000).

While several publications have been written regarding the value of touch for sighted and visually impaired audiences (Pye, 2007; Romanek & Lynch, 2008; Wing et al., 2007), there are problems with limiting visitors' access to works of art through touch only. Touch tours can be problematic because they can limit the breadth of subjects and the level of understanding that visitors can reach while exploring art (Candlin, 2003). Furthermore, it is clear that visitors with visual impairments want their museum experience to go beyond a touch tour (Reich et al., 2011). Some argue that museums might be able to merge tactile elements and the visual nature of works of art by creating multisensory or multimodal learning experiences not just for visitors with special needs, but for all visitors (Candlin, 2003; De Coster & Loots, 2004). Creating multimodal learning experiences that everyone can enjoy regardless of ability would support the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare's (HEW) statement from May 1977 urging that people with disabilities be integrated into existing programs, and that programs which perpetuate segregation between the general public and disabled audiences should be stopped (Kenney, 1980). Furthermore, Pearson (2003) mentions that people who are blind or visually impaired might not be interested in tactile experiences and might prefer to access works of art through other modalities. Multisensory museum programs and exhibitions would make this possible and could foster inclusion since, as McGinnis (2007) argues, accommodations made for people with disabilities can often benefit the general public. For example, the Brookfield Zoo in Brookfield, Illinois

developed sensory exhibits that could be used during tours for both special populations and the rest of the public (American Association of Museums, 1992).

Creating Accessible Spaces and Programs

Although art museum staff have made efforts to welcome visitors with visual impairments into their museums since the early 1900s, it appears that they still have a lot to accomplish to truly welcome this audience and make art accessible to them (Candlin, 2003, 2006; Reich et al., 2011). Research studies in which visually impaired audiences have been asked for feedback have revealed that:

> just as with sighted visitors, visitors who are blind or have low vision have a diverse range of backgrounds, interests, learning styles, and experiences they bring with them to the museum, which shape the content they are interested in and the ways they wish to learn. (Reich et al., 2011, p. 51)

Furthermore, the majority of the literature that exists regarding museum programs for visitors with visual impairments focuses on touch tours, visual descriptions, tactile diagrams, and art making, and not on how to integrate these tools into mainstream programs (Axel & Levent, 2003). It must also be noted that very few studies talk about the effectiveness of the techniques currently used in art museums (Candlin, 2003; Hetherington, 2000; Reich et al., 2011). Reich et al. (2011) conducted a study in which visitors with visual impairments were asked to attend focus groups for six museums and provide feedback in regards to possible programming and physical access to collections and didactic materials. They found that visitors with visual impairments often had negative experiences because they felt unwelcome or unsafe and "suggest that creating an environment where people who are blind or have low vision feel welcome may be an

important first step" (Reich et al., 2011, p. 50). Visitors with special needs, like non-special needs visitors, sometimes have the notion that art museums are only for a certain part of the population and that the museum is simply not a place for people with disabilities (Andrus, 1999; McGinnis, 2007). Asking disabled visitors or employees what they need and how museums can serve them is a step staff can take to help welcome visitors with disabilities (Andrus, 1999; Axel & Levent, 2003; McGinnis, 2007; Steiner, 1992). In addition, training staff to welcome visitors with visual impairments would help make this audience feel welcome (Axel & Levent, 2003; Reich et al., 2011). Both McGinnis (2007) and Andrus (1999) agree that in order to create successful programs for people with disabilities, the museum staff must have the right attitude. For visitors with visual impairments, that means seeing them as a heterogeneous group of individuals and not as a group of individuals defined by their lack of sight (Candlin, 2003). In other words, blindness should not be the determining aspect of their visit but simply a need to take into consideration much like educators would consider the needs of non-disabled visitors (Candlin, 2003).

Of significance to this thesis are two publications from Art Beyond Sight (ABS), a non-profit organization dedicated to making art, art history, and visual culture accessible to people who are blind. These publications provide recommendations regarding programming in art museums for visitors with visual impairments, which I will refer to again in Chapter 6 when discussing whether or not the *INsights and OUTlooks* program at the Meadows Museum of Art address these recommendations (Axel & Levent, 2003; Reich et al., 2011). In the publication *Art Beyond Sight: A Resource Guide*

to Art, Creativity, and Visual Impairment (Axel & Levent, 2003), there is an entire section dedicated to museum programming and getting started. They recommend the following:

- Museums should form an advisory board comprising both visitors with visual impariments and specialists in the field of serving visually impaired groups.
- Museum staff and educators should go through sensitivity and mobility training to better meet the needs of visually impaired visitors.
- Museums should pilot a program with visually impaired people to gain invaluable information regarding the successes and failures of the program.
- Museum tour groups should be kept small and individual attention is necessary to make sure the needs of visitors are being met.
- Museums should disseminate information about programs by reaching out to specialist in the field of education for the visually impaired.
- Museum staff should consistently ask their audience questions and listen to what they need in order to make necessary changes to programs.

A later study conducted by Reich et al. (2011) revealed similar information and furthered art museums staff's understanding of the needs and wants of visually impaired audiences who visit these institutions. The study was meant to gather information on developing programs that meet the needs of visitors with visual impairments. It included seven major art museums across the United States and added the perspectives of visitors with visual impairments about museum accessibility to literature in the field. The research unveiled new problems and confirmed problems other authors had written about

previously (Reich et al., 2011).[3] A major concern of participants was the struggles behind planning a visit to the museum, since this can often be stressful for visitors with visual impairments (Candlin, 2003; Reich et al., 2011). Advertising through local organizations that work with the blind and visually impaired, creating websites that are accessible, and offering special discounts or reduced ticket prices might attract more visitors (Reich et al., 2011). Furthermore, people with visual impairments have a range in backgrounds regarding their involvement in the arts, preferences, and interest in self-advocacy (Candlin, 2003; De Coster & Loots, 2004; Reich et al., 2011).

Also, when preparing programs and spaces for the visually impaired, museum staff must keep in mind that visitors with visual impairments have a range of backgrounds related to vision and not all of them rely on touch to the same degree (Candlin, 2003; De Coster & Loots, 2004; Reich et al., 2011) Only a small number of people were born blind, and there is a difference between people who lose their sight gradually and those who lose it suddenly (De Coster & Loots, 2004). Furthermore, some people with visual impairments have some useful sight, but this degree of sight varies depending on the type of vision loss they have (De Coster & Loots, 2004; Seidman, 2003). For example, someone with central vision loss might be able to read large print text, whereas people with peripheral loss might not be able to do so because the image goes beyond their usable vision field (Seidman, 2003). It is important to have various tools available for people with diverse types of vision loss, but it is also necessary to give these visitors different types of experiences to chose from with wide-ranging content

[3] For issues mentioned by other authors, see Candlin (2003, 2006); Hetherington (2000, 2003); De Coster and Loots (2004)

areas since people with visual impairments attend museums for both the social and educational opportunities offered (Candlin, 2003; Reich et al., 2011).

Although visitors with visual impairments are open to visiting museums, they often feel unwelcome (Reich et al., 2011) A reoccurring theme in the literature is that the actions and attitudes of museum staff often affect how visually impaired visitors feel about visiting museums (Andrus, 1999; Candlin, 2003; De Coster & Loots, 2004; McGinnis, 2007). Training staff to be sensitive to the needs of this and all other populations is key to lessening the occurrence of negative experiences (Reich et al., 2011). A participant in the study conducted by Reich et al. (2011) noted that they felt like "criminals" and lost some of their "dignity" because museum staff would treat them like children (p. 50). Through these discussions, it is apparent that negative stereotypes of people with disabilities still exist and participants in the study felt like they were being treated like children or unintelligent beings simply because they were blind (Reich et al., 2011). De Coster and Loots (2004) argue that museum staff are key instruments in helping visually impaired visitors engage with and understand art by stimulating dialogue and conversations that center around works of art at their institution. Another factor that makes visitors with visual impairments feel like a nuisance is the lack of accessibility programs and exhibitions that enable them to explore the museum alongside sighted visitors (Reich et al., 2011) Since participant responses were extremely diverse in regards to what types of programs they wanted, museums must think of a variety of ways to accommodate individual preferences (Reich et al., 2011). As mentioned earlier, multi-sensory experiences might be a solution (Candlin, 2003, 2006; McGinnis, 2007).

However, visitors with visual impairments want exhibitions and programs that are inclusive and foster independence (Reich et al., 2011).

CONCLUSION

It is evident that the changing perceptions of what it means to be disabled are infiltrating the museum field and educators are responding by creating programs and exhibitions that are inclusive. Addressing all the visitors' needs is a difficult task since each disability requires different accommodations; however, museum educators have learned that these audiences do not feel welcome in art museums. To change this, museum educators are asking individuals with disabilities what they want out of museums and listening to their requests. What they have learned is that each audience has specific needs; and in order to address these needs, art museum educators should to offer a variety of programs and ways in which to access art and exhibitions, much like they do for visitors without special needs. Even when you consider serving visitors with a similar disability, it is unlikely that the same method will enable museum educators to create meaningful experiences with art for all the visitors who have that disability. Research has shown that this is especially true for visitors with visual impairments due to their varying levels of visual impairment. However, audiences with visual impairments have given art museum educators plenty of information to work with in regards to creating programs and spaces that meet their needs. Museum educators must take this information and let it inform their educational practices to create successful programs for this type of audience.

Museum educators are advocating for a shift in how programs and exhibition spaces are designed, and it is amidst these changing ideas that the staff at the Meadows Museum has created the *INsights and OUTlooks* program. The literature reviewed in this chapter not only situates the Meadows Museum within the larger topic of disability, but it will serve as a reference point for comparing the views of the Meadows Museum of Art's staff to those of other museum educators in the field.

Chapter 3: Research Method

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Case Study

Case studies are often qualitative in nature, meaning that they are descriptive and interpretive (Gillham, 2000). Conducting a qualitative inquiry is appropriate to my study for several reasons (Stokrocki, 1997). First, gathering data for qualitative research tends to occur in a natural setting "where participants experience the issue or problem under study" (Creswell, 2009, p. 175). The majority of my observations and interactions with staff occurred within the walls of the Meadows Museum of Art. Most importantly, this study is qualitative in nature for it seeks to give a holistic account of the development and implementation of the *INsights and OUTlooks* program and to find out what really happened when creating this program (Creswell, 2009; Gillham, 2000; Stake, 2010). This was achieved by obtaining the perspectives of staff members, collecting any documents used in preparation for the program, and using my personal observations to identify other factors involved in the creation of the program that were not present in documents or staff perspectives.

Furthermore, in qualitative inquiry researchers collect and interpret data themselves as opposed to relying on tools developed by other researchers (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research is subjective in nature and interpretations can be flawed; therefore, it is important that the researcher use various methods of data collection to make sure interpretations are suitable (Stake, 1995). Common methods of data collection in qualitative inquiries include observations, interviews, and analysis of documents or

artifacts (Stake, 2010). For this study, I gathered data through observations, field notes, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Since each method has its strengths and weaknesses, it is important to utilize more than one method of data collection to validate findings in qualitative research (Gillham, 2000). The use of multiple modes of data collection by the researcher to validate findings is known as triangulation (Gillham, 2007).

While there are many qualitative inquiry directions that one can take for analyzing and collecting data, I selected a case study approach for this study because it provides an effective form to investigate and better understand a single complex case within its natural setting (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Case studies can focus on an individual, a group, an institution, or a community (Gillham, 2000). In this instance, the single case examined focuses on the *INsights and OUTlooks* program at the Meadows Museum of Art. More specifically, the study focused on the efforts of museum staff to include visitors with visual impairments in the first two sessions of the program. Since a case study often leads to a better understanding of a specific event, group, or individual, I chose to limit my research to observing and gathering data leading up to the first two sessions of *INsights and OUTlooks* for "we gain a better understanding of the whole by focusing on a key part" (Gering, 2007, p. 1).

SELECTING THE OBSERVATIONAL SITE, PROGRAM, AND PARTICIPANTS

I first began to consider the Meadows Museum of Art at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas as a possible research site during my time there as an intern

in the summer of 2012. I initially accepted an internship at this institution due to their growing focus on serving audiences with disabilities. The opportunity to learn more about the museum's access programs drove my research towards a study of how the education staff was serving visitors with visual impairments specifically. I must confess that working with this audience had not been of particular interest to me since many art museums already offer accommodations and programs for the visually impaired.[4] However, after talking with the staff at the Meadows, it appeared that their approaches to making art accessible to this population were different from other museums. Furthermore, the Education Department staff's vision for the future of their exhibition spaces and programs centers on ideas of inclusion through the use of interdisciplinary and multi-sensory techniques, something in which I am extremely interested. As Merriam (1998) points out, it is important that the case study focus on what the researcher wants to learn more about; therefore, conducting my study at the Meadows seemed like a logical choice.

Stake (1995) points out that case studies are often limited by time and access and that researchers must sometimes pick cases that are easy to get to and welcoming to our inquiry. In my case, the education staff at the Meadows was open to having me conduct my research at their institution, and it was opportune that they were just beginning their initiatives for the visually impaired during my summer there. Most importantly, they were in the early stages of developing the *INsights and OUTlooks* program. This program became the focus of my study since it is meant to be an ongoing educational program

[4] For a description of art museums and their programs for the visually impaired see Axel & Levent (2004).

inclusive of both sighted and non-sighted visitors. Furthermore, the first session of the program would occur on November 27, 2012 which fit in with my research timeline. It appears that few museums are creating inclusive programs and if they are doing so, it has not been documented. When selecting a research topic, it is important to choose something of interest to the researcher and that fills in a gap in knowledge within the field (Merriam, 1998). The unique nature of *INsights and OUTlooks* and the ability to document such a phenomenon was another significant reason for selecting this program for my case study (Merriam, 1998).

After selecting the site of study and securing permission from the Director of Education at the Meadows to investigate *INsights and OUTlooks*, I employed purposeful sampling to determine who to interview, the number of program sessions to observe, and which staff meetings to attend. Since I was interested in understanding how the education staff prepared for *INsights and OUTlooks*, purposeful sampling proved to be the best method to use since it allows the researcher to "select a sample from which the most can be learned (Merriam, 1998). I decided to observe the first two sessions of *INsights and OUTlooks* in order to gain a better understanding of the techniques being used to make art accessible to visitors with visual impairments. Furthermore, since the focus of my study was the design and implementation of the program, this would enable me to observe if changes were made or not, based on what was learned from the first session. My initial plan for research in regards to who to interview changed once I began collecting data (Creswell, 2009). Originally, I thought I would be interviewing docents, volunteers, and contract staff. However, once I started my research it became evident that

only three people were directly involved in creating lesson plans for and leading *INsights and OUTlooks* (Yin, 2009). This group included Carmen Smith, the Director of Education at the Meadows; Allison Bowles Davidson, the Graduate Fellow for Access Programs at the Meadows; and John Bramblitt, a blind artist in the Dallas/Fort Worth area who would be developing curriculum for and leading the program. As my research progressed, I discovered that I was able to be present during a brainstorming session and a debriefing session regarding the program; therefore, I decided to add these to my data collection since they would place me in a position to observe the staff during their planning process and better answer my research question (Yin, 2010).

RESEARCHER'S ROLE

During this study I took on the roles of participant observer and interpreter (Stokrocki, 1997). Within a qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the primary tool for gathering data and as a participant observer she does not simply study people but learns from them (Stokrocki, 1997). Since my research involved working closely with the staff of the Meadows and going behind the scenes of *INsights and OUTlooks*, I was not only observing their actions, but constantly asking questions that would allow me to learn more about the process for creating their program and the motivations behind their actions. Also, as participant observer, the researcher can shift between the roles of complete observer, full participant, and half participant and half observer (Stokrocki, 1997; Yin, 2010). In the process of collecting data, I fell under one or more of these categories, depending on the situation.

I was a full observer during the first session of the *INsights and OUTlooks* program, which occurred on November 29, 2012. I thought it would be best to simply observe this session in order to gain a thorough understanding of what the program entailed and not be distracted by my own participation in the program. I also decided the role of full observer would be best during the brainstorming session on January 15, 2012 for the planning of the second session of *INsights & OUTlooks*. Since my research focuses greatly on the perspectives of the staff and their efforts to create a program for visually impaired visitors, I did not want my opinions to influence their lesson plans for the second session of the program.

I must mention that the role of full observer was difficult for me since the staff encouraged me to give them feedback about the program and share my thoughts with them. When being a full observer was a challenge, I took on the role of half participant and half observer. This was the case for the debriefing session that occurred on December 12, 2012 between Carmen, Allison, and John to discuss the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks*. Carmen asked me to share my observations and feedback with them during this session. Therefore, I e-mailed her my notes on the program, participated in the discussion, and also took notes on what everyone else involved in the conversation was saying. I was also a half participant and half observer during the second session of the *INsights and OUTlooks* program, which occurred on January 21, 2013. During this session I took notes, assisted the staff in handing out materials during the program, and participated in some of the discussions visitors were having (Gillham, 2000).

As a researcher, I wanted to gain an understanding of the staff's opinions regarding the creation and implementation of the *INsights and OUTlooks* program and not my own (Stake, 1995). I believe that having established positive relationships with the education staff prior to conducting my research was helpful. Ideally, a researcher wants to gain information in the least intrusive way possible, which is often achieved through discrete observation (Stake, 1995). I wanted the staff to feel comfortable enough to lead the *INsights and OUTlooks* program without being aware of my presence or changing their behaviors because of it. I believe that by gaining the staff's trust, they were able to express themselves naturally without inhibitions during both observed sessions of the program. Furthermore, establishing a relationship with the staff involved in the planning and implementing of the program gave them the opportunity to share their true feelings, whether positive or negative, during the interview process, the brainstorming session, and the debriefing session. However, as a researcher it was also important that I not let my positive relationship with the staff alter my interpretation of the information they gave me or of what I was observing. To ensure that my findings were presented in an unbiased manner, I was open to explore any findings that emerged from the data which were contrary to my own beliefs and ideologies (Yin, 2009).

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Evidence collected for case studies can come from various sources. Yin (2010) highlights the use of six different sources from which information can come from: interviews, direct observation, archival records, participant-observation, documentation,

and physical artifacts. For my research I relied on interviews, direct and participant observation, and documentation.

Observations

I observed two consecutive sessions of *INsights and OUTlooks*. One occurred on November 27, 2012 and the other on January 31, 2013. I also participated in two phone conferences. The first one was the debriefing session, which occurred on December 12, 2012; the second was the brainstorming or planning session that took place on January 15, 2013. During all of these events, I used descriptive and reflective field notes to record my observations (Creswell, 2009). My descriptive notes included details about things I saw and heard during the events being observed. My reflective notes included my personal thoughts on the program and questions that arose from my observations (Creswell, 2009). Since Carmen asked me to share my opinion with her regarding the sessions I attended of *INsights and OUTlooks*, I decided to take reflective notes that I could later share with her.

Documents

Public and private documents are another form of data collection that further informed my study (Creswell, 2009). I collected public documents about the program, which included flyers, website information, and handouts for visitors that related to *INsights and OUTlooks*. Furthermore, I collected private documents. Amongst these documents were e-mails between Carmen, Allison, and John; lesson plans and agendas created by Carmen and Allison; and staff notes regarding a focus group conducted at the

museum in September of 2012, which established the foundation for *INsights and OUTlooks*.

Interviews

I decided to conduct semi-structured interviews, as opposed to structured interviews, because they facilitate dialogue and allow the researcher to omit or add questions that best inform the inquiry (Gillham, 2007; Yin, 2009). When crafting my interview questions, I created questions that I wanted to ask all three people being interviewed; but also wanted to ensure that I asked questions specific to each interviewee, if necessary (Appendix A). Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to do both since one can prompt interviewees with supplementary questions based on their answers to predetermined questions (Gillham, 2007; Merriam, 1998). My interview questions included both elements described by Merriam (1998). The questions were crafted in a manner that would enable the respondents to express their views (Merriam, 1998), and revolved around each person's involvement with *INsights and OUTlooks* and their motivations for participating in the creation of such a program.

Since the number of participants was small and the questions I wanted to ask were open-ended, face-to-face interviews with Carmen, Allison, and John were possible (Gillham, 2000). I used both audio recordings and field notes during the interview process (Stokrocki, 1997). Gillham (2007) argues that good semi-structured interviews are flexible and flow naturally, and recommends that the researcher be selective when taking notes as to not distract the interviewee. Based on his observations, my use of field

notes during the interview was minimal and limited to recording information I thought to be extremely important or questions that emerged as the interview progressed. Through minimal note taking during interviews, I was able to move through my inquiry in a fluid as opposed to rigid manner (Yin, 2010). I arranged all the interviews through e-mail and conducted those with Allison and Carmen at the Meadows on November 29, 2012. John's interview took place in his home on January 4, 2013, since it was more convenient for him.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

My data analysis process was continuous and occurred both while I was collecting data and after data collection had been completed (Creswell, 2009). I found myself transcribing interviews, reflecting on the information provided in the interviews and staff meetings, and making notes on issues that needed clarification throughout the data gathering process. After my observations were complete, I sifted through transcribed interviews, field notes, public and private documents, and e-mail communications and organized everything by date of occurrence (Creswell, 2009; Stake, 1995). This process was simple since I had included headers with information, such as date, place, and event, for all of my data as I collected it (Stokrocki, 1997). I sorted through all of my content and tried to reduce my field notes into categories or "conceptual clusters" (Stokrocki, 1997, p. 41). If I saw something repeated within a document, I highlighted it in one color and used the same color if the concept came up again in other documents. Stokrocki (1997) mentions that importance is determined by frequent recurrence or emotional intensity, so I made note of

things that were mentioned frequently or that appeared in two or more data sources. These conceptual clusters developed into the themes that are presented in Chapter 5 of this study.

I transcribed audio recordings and field notes within a week of their occurrence to make sure I included as much detail as possible while the events were fresh in my mind (Gillham, 2000). I listened to the audio recordings repeatedly both before and after having transcribed them to further familiarize myself with the content. The more I listened, the easier it was to pinpoint concept clusters or categories that might help answer my research question (Gillham, 2000). Also, transcribing the audio recordings of interviews was extremely helpful for coding, since similar patterns and connections across the three sets of interviews were easily identifiable. This process also facilitated the isolation of concepts that did not appear in at least three of the data sources gathered. The coding of my data was based on the emerging information collected and not based on the use of predetermined codes (Creswell, 2007). As mentioned previously, I was interested in depicting the perspectives of the staff and what they believed to be important, as opposed to what I thought to be significant in the creation and implementation of *INsights & OUTlooks*. For this reason, letting the coding occur naturally as I was sifting through the data was more important for me then having the information fit under pre-determined codes.

A reoccurring issue and a criticism of data analysis for qualitative research is that the validity of findings are often questioned. To validate my findings and minimize the bias I brought to the research, I used triangulation methods (Merriam, 1998). Coding the different data sources and checking for the existence of consistent themes throughout them was an important step in making sure that the themes I deemed to be important were in fact truthful and present in the sources. As far as interviews are concerned, Gillham

(2000) mentions that researchers must be aware of whether or not the information conveyed by the interviewee is reliable. Sometimes there is a discrepancy between what people believe and what they actually do (Gillham, 2000). I compared the information given to me during the interviews to what I observed. As I encountered the interview participants in different settings, I took note of what they did and said to make sure their actions corresponded with what was said in the interview and to further confirm the validity of my findings (Stake, 1995).

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have explained what qualitative case studies entail and why this research method was ideal for my study. I also discussed how my role as a researcher and participant observer influenced the study and the different forms of data collection I utilized to best answer my research questions. The methods for conducting my case study discussed in this chapter were important for the development of Chapters 4 and 5, where I present the findings that came from the collection and analysis of my data. However, a description of the *INsights and OUTlooks* program and what transpired during the sessions and meetings I observed is necessary in order to understand the information presented in Chapter 5. These descriptions are presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Data

This chapter presents a detailed account of my observations of the first two sessions of *INsights and OUTlooks* and of what I gathered from attending the two staff meetings that occurred between the first and the second session of the program. To better understand the context in which *INsights and OUTlooks* was conceived, I have also included background information about inclusive programming at the Meadows, and about the people who created and implemented *INsights and OUTlooks* as well as their motivations for doing so.

THE MEADOWS MUSEUM AND INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING[5]

Programs for people with disabilities at the Meadows Museum were first offered under the direction of Carmen Smith, Director of Education. The first program geared towards people with disabilities was *Connections*, a program for visitors with early stage dementia and their caregivers. From this program stemmed the idea to create educational programs and spaces that were fully inclusive, and Carmen Smith then began what she often refers to as the "inclusion initiative" for the education department. After only a few sessions, the staff conducting *Connections* realized that many of the teaching strategies used in *Connections* could be used to teach other audiences. According to the education staff, this program was one of the first inclusive programs the Meadows Museum developed for it served both the visitor with the disability and their non-disabled partner. The success of this program led the education staff to think about ways in which to

[5] The information presented in this section comes from my interviews, the Meadows Museum's website, and flyers related to *INsights and OUTlooks*.

engage visitors of all abilities with art simultaneously, something which the education department hopes to accomplish through *INsights and OUTlooks*.

The inclusion initiative encompasses a multi-phase plan to make the museum spaces and programs accessible and relevant to all visitors, regardless of their ability. This multi-phase plan also includes new training opportunities for docents and education staff in order to introduce them to inclusive ideas and techniques and the creation of *INsights and OUTlooks*, the program under study. Furthermore, education staff at the Meadows has partnered with members of the community to develop tools and resources that will make the museum as a whole accessible to visitors with visual impairments; amongst these are tactile graphic representations of works of art, braille and large-print text, tactile maps of the museum space, and verbal descriptions of art works. These tools are not only used during sessions *INsights and OUTlooks*, but also can be requested by visitors to employ during tours or to explore the museum independently.

INSIGHTS AND OUTLOOKS

Educators

The *INsights and OUTlooks* program was created under the direction of three educators, all of who were instrumental to this study.

John Bramblitt

John Bramblitt is a blind artist currently living in Denton, Texas. His art has been sold in more than twenty countries, and he often conducts innovative art workshops at galleries and museums across the country. His workshops are innovative in that they are

multisensory and designed so that anyone, regardless of ability, can participate. Furthermore, the workshops are experimental in nature and often incorporate techniques that John uses in his own practice as an artist or when teaching art to people with visual impairments. Currently he leads and participates in workshops and programs at both the Meadows Museum of Art and the Dallas Museum of Art in Dallas, Texas. Although John has conducted workshops at both galleries and art museums, he prefers working with museums because there is a focus on educating visitors about works of art as opposed to a focus on selling art.

John would like individual sessions of *INsights and OUTlooks* to build upon each other, so that people who attend regularly are able to grow artistically and to further their interactions with art. Additionally, he hopes that visitors with visual impairments who continuously participate in *INsights and OUTlooks* will gain a better understanding of art and realize that art appreciation can be gained through senses other than sight. Ideally, John would like every session of the program to be a collaboration in which all participants bring their own knowledge to the table, and John is simply there to facilitate the experience by giving visitors multiple ways to think about works of art.

Carmen Smith

Carmen Smith is the Director of Education at the Meadows Museum of Art. During her tenure at the museum she has spearheaded the creation of access programs like *Connections* and *INsights and OUTlooks*. As Director of Education her main goal is to create educational programs, spaces, and exhibitions that make art accessible and

relatable to all visitors regardless of ability. Through her efforts the museum has widened the range of audiences served and its connections in the community. She believes that working with special needs audiences makes museum educators think more creatively about how they engage their audiences, and that many of the approaches used for special needs visitors actually are attractive to other audiences.

For Carmen *INsights and OUTlooks* was developed in accordance with the belief that adaptive techniques for special needs audiences benefit all. Furthermore, through this program Carmen hopes to develop a model for a successful inclusive program, meaning that the program will be mutually meaningful to all participants regardless of physical ability. To prepare for *INsights and OUTlooks*, Carmen consulted with Mary Ann Siller, National Consultant in Blindness and Low Vision, with John Bramblitt, and with the Art Beyond Sight (ABS) organization (see Chapter 2).

Allison Bowles Davidson

Allison Bowles Davidson was the Graduate Fellow for Access Programs at the Meadows Museum of Art while I conducted my research. This position is a yearlong, paid fellowship that focuses on access initiatives at the museum. She first began her work with the Meadows Museum of Art in the summer of 2010 as an intern and was at the museum when the program *Connections* was being developed. It was Allison's participation in this program that sparked her interest in working with special needs audiences and inspired her to take the Graduate Fellow position. Her fellowship began in August 2012 and lasted through May 2013. As the Graduate Fellow, she supports staff at

the Meadows in their efforts to create accessible programs and spaces. Furthermore, Allison often helps develop curriculum for and teach access programs at the museum. In 2012 she attended the bi-annual Art Beyond Sight: Multimodal Approaches to Learning Conference held in New York, the contents of which informed her practice when developing *INsights and OUTlooks*.[6] She believes that art museums have the potential to offer unique experiences for visitors of all abilities to engage with art. Allison also believes educators can achieve this by providing multiple ways for people to interact with art and hoped to offer that for visitors who participated in *INsights and OUTlooks*.

Program Overview

As already mentioned, *INsights and OUTlooks* materialized due to a museum-wide effort to create both programs and spaces that make art accessible to all visitors. However, there were other components that informed the construction of this program. On September 22, 2012, the museum participated in a multi-site and ongoing study that was conducted by Art Beyond Sight (ABS) across museums in the United States. For these studies, the ABS institute partners with art museums to research the needs and preferences of visitors with low vision, and to help institutions learn more about creating programs and spaces for the visually impaired.[7] As part of this study, the Meadows put together a gallery experience for visitors with visual impairments. This allowed museum staff to collect data regarding the effectiveness of the different approaches, tools, and

[6] This conference addressed inclusive and multisensory learning environments and strategies in relation to the arts and museums. For more information on this conference, visit artbeyondsight.org.
[7] This study began in 2008 and the results of the first study were published in 2011. This publication (Reich et al., 2011) and the results are discussed in-depth in Chapter 2.

activities that were utilized during the gallery experience. The feedback came in the form of a participant survey, which included questions provided by both ABS and the Meadows Museum staff.

The staff at the Meadows Museum utilized the data gathered from the focus group to create *INsights and OUTlooks*. This program is an evening gallery series with blind guest artist John Bramblitt. Sighted and non-sighted visitors are invited to join John, volunteers, museum docents, and education staff for two hours as they go into a broad and in-depth exploration of a single work of art from the Museum's permanent collection. Visitors have the option of partnering with a docent or volunteer if they came alone. The majority of the volunteers for this program are SMU students who are members of the Delta Gamma sorority on campus, and have received training from the Meadows Museum education staff on interacting with visually impaired visitors. The program is designed for adults 17 years of age and older, and offers participants multiple ways to access and think about works of art through the use of tools such as tactile reproductions, visual descriptions, and multi-sensory activities. Furthermore, all of the tools that were and are being developed as part of the inclusion initiative are incorporated into the program when appropriate. To attend the program visitors are asked to call or e-mail Carmen ahead of time to reserve a spot since space is limited. As mentioned in Chapter 3, I observed the first two sessions of *INsights and OUTlooks*, discussed below, to draw comparisons and trace the changes made from one session to the next.

INSIGHTS AND OUTLOOKS: FIRST SESSION

Program Activities and Details

The first session of *INsights and OUTlooks* occurred on November 27, 2012 and centered on the work by Francisco Goya titled *Yard With Madmen* (see Appendix B, Figure 1). As the program began visitors were greeted at the main entrance and directed to a gallery on the second floor of the museum where chairs had been placed in front of Goya's work. Once everyone was settled in, Carmen and John welcomed the visitors and informed them that this was the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks* to be conducted at the museum and they would appreciate any feedback regarding the session. They also introduced the different tools that were available to the participants. These tools included low vision goggles, large print text, monoculars[8], and a printed image of the painting under study with compositional lines (Appendix C). Visitors, whether sighted or non-sighted, were encouraged to use any of the tools at hand and to go up and take a closer look at the painting at any time during the program.

To initiate conversation John asked a series of questions that prompted visitors to describe the painting and engaged them in a talk about the use of dark and light values and the depiction of the human figure within the artwork. When visitors did not respond to questions within a few seconds, John would follow up with other questions. Some of the questions he asked were simply to elicit compositional information regarding the work, and others stimulated visitors to go beyond what was being represented. For example, John asked visitors to think about the smells they might encounter and sounds

[8] Monoculars are optical instruments for viewing distant objects with one eye.

they might hear if they were part of the scene depicted by Goya. When visitors were asked to describe the painting to John and others in the audience, sighted visitors were excited to participate. After allowing visitors to describe the painting themselves, a verbal description of the work was read and visitors were encouraged to provide additional information that had not been covered already and to ask any questions they had. Taking time to make sure that non-sighted visitors understood the different elements of the painting was extremely important to both John and Carmen. They wanted to make sure that both sighted and non-sighted visitors had sufficient visual information to delve deeply into the meaning of the work.

Another tool used to supplement visitors' understanding of the compositional elements of the painting were blackboards. These blackboards are special in that any lines marked on them with a writing tool create indentations on the board and are discernible to touch. Each visitor was given a blackboard on which they could trace compositional lines found in the painting using a pen and the image of the painting they were given earlier. When visitors drew on the blackboards, they ended up with a tactile representation of the drawing since the pen created grooves that could be felt. Some of the visitors drew the compositional lines for their visually impaired partner, and they were then able to feel it and gain a better understanding of the compositional layout. Both sighted and non-sighted visitors were engaged by this activity; however, it was difficult to create lines on the blackboard since it was necessary to put significant pressure on it to make a mark. This activity might have worked better if there had been tables available to stabilize the boards and make it easier to apply pressure to them. An additional challenge

was that participants were often engaged in conversations with their partner, so that it was difficult to get their attention in order to transition into the next phase of the program. This was a reoccurring problem throughout the session and something that was discussed by the education staff later (see section on the Debriefing Meeting).

For this session John also shared a musical composition by Beethoven with the group, which he felt expressed some of the ideas in the painting. Unfortunately, the acoustics in the gallery were poor, and it was challenging for visitors to hear the music and to listen to what John was saying. Visitors were also given the opportunity to touch a marble sculpture by Auguste Rodin (Appendix A, Figure 2) at the Meadows that related to the discussion of how the human body was represented in the work of Goya. Visitors who wanted to participate were asked to wear gloves provided by the museum staff and John gave the visitors advice on different techniques to use when touching works of art to maximize the experience. All visitors, both sighted and non-sighted, were eager to participate and the air was filled with lively conversation as they experienced the works through touch. There were so many individual conversations occurring that John and Carmen had a hard time getting everyone's attention and encouraging visitors to talk about how this work related to the work by Goya. However, visitors' conversations amongst each other often related to the works of art and their experience through touch.

To conclude the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks*, visitors participated in an art-making activity. Allison and Carmen simplified the painting by Goya into compositional shapes (Appendix C, Figure 5). They then traced the shapes using puff paint onto a white sheet of paper and made one for each visitor (Appendix C, Figure 6).

They used puff paint as opposed to other writing tools because once the puff paint dries, it is possible to feel the lines traced on the paper. Visitors were to use this composition along with paint to create light and dark values within the paper. They were allowed to pick a pair of complimentary colors, either purple and yellow or blue and orange. Each color had been mixed with another substance, such as sand or flour, to give it a unique texture and consistency. This would enable visitors to distinguish between the two colors, based on how they felt to the touch. Visitors were then to rely on their sense of touch to navigate through the paper and mix the colors. John explained that they would be able to gauge how dark the color was depending on the texture. For example, if they were using purple and yellow paint, they would have to add more yellow than purple paint to create lighter areas and verify this by checking the texture. If the texture of their mixture was closer in nature to that of the yellow, then the color produced would most likely be a lighter shade. Furthermore, it must be noted that visitors who were sighted were given the option to be blindfolded for the activity and a few of them accepted the challenge. After the activity was over visitors were encouraged to take their works home, but most of them decided to leave them behind. It seems that they were more interested in the process than in the product. This could be because the point of the art-making activity was to create something using the sense of touch, whether visually appealing or not.

The Visitors

There were a total of twenty visitors during the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks*. The majority of them came in pairs whether sighted or non-sighted. Some

sighted visitors came with other sighted visitors and non-sighted visitors either came alone or with a sighted partner. There were six visually impaired visitors and fourteen sighted visitors. Some of the visually impaired visitors had participated in the September focus group at the museum. All of the visitors were asked to provide feedback about the session in a survey that Carmen e-mailed to them after the program. Some responded via e-mail to Carmen and their responses were shared during the debriefing meeting to be discussed later on in this chapter.

John's Role

John taught the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks* in its entirety. Prior to the session, he collaborated with Carmen to decide which work of art he wanted to focus on and discuss possible gallery and studio activities. John wanted to have a flexible structure that allowed visitors to explore aspects of the painting they were interested in. During this first session, John led the gallery discussions and activities, and guided visitors during the art-making section of the program.

Carmen's Role

Carmen handled all the communications with visitors prior to and after the first session of the program. Visitors signed up to attend *INsights and OUTlooks* with Carmen, either through the phone or via e-mail, and some responded to the survey she sent out after the first session with their opinions about the program. Carmen collaborated with John to design the first session and provided him with information about the works of art so that he could create his lesson. During the actual program, Carmen's role was that of

facilitator. She let John lead the majority of the discussion and helped mostly with passing out materials and directing people from one space to the next. She sometimes added to John's observations and the visitor's responses, but this contribution was minimal.

Allison's Role

Allison was in charge of preparing the materials for the art-making activity and coordinating with the volunteers before and during the program. She instructed the volunteers on the tasks they would be helping with and gave them an overview of what would transpire. During the gallery and art-making components, she served as a facilitator by passing out materials and helping John when necessary.

The Volunteers

Volunteers during this session assisted in several ways. Some of them were paired with visually impaired visitors who did not have someone accompany them to the program. However, this was only the case if the visitor actually wanted to have a partner to help them with some of the activities and to engage in conversation. In addition, volunteers helped pass out materials, directed people when moving from one space to the next, and aided the staff during the art-making activity.

BEHIND THE SCENES: PREPARING FOR THE SECOND SESSION

Prior to attending the second session of *INsights and OUTlooks* in January, I listened in on two meetings in which Carmen, Allison, and John planned the session and

discussed the overall structure of the program. One of these meetings was a debriefing conference about the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks*, which occurred in November. This conversation was responsible for the structural changes that occurred in the second session of *INsights and OUTlooks*. The second meeting I collected data from was a planning meeting, which occurred to organize the second session of the program. Details of both meetings are discussed below.

Debriefing Meeting

The debriefing meeting occurred in the form of a conference call with Allison, John, Carmen, and myself on December 12, 2012. The purpose of this follow-up meeting was to share ideas about the successes and shortcomings of the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks*. Overall, it was decided that the program was a success, but the team realized some structural changes needed to occur. They arrived at this conclusion based on their own observations, my field observations, and the feedback Carmen received from the visitors who responded to the survey sent out after the first session.

During my interviews with John and Carmen, they both expressed some of the concerns they had about the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks* prior to its occurrence. One of Carmen's concerns was making sure the program ran at a pace that allowed everyone to learn from the experience. John's main concern was making sure he kept a loose structure to give visitors the freedom to go were they wanted with the artworks. While visitor feedback received by Carmen was mostly positive, some visitors did feel that having a more strict structure for the program would allow for better pacing

and a deeper understanding of the material. Oftentimes, the room got too loud and it was difficult for John to get everyone's attention. Since the majority of the visitors came in pairs, they wanted to engage in conversations with their partner. Furthermore, visitors with visual impairments often needed to talk to their partner or facilitator to get the most out of the activities. Since the staff wanted to give visitors time to talk amongst themselves, they decided that incorporating small group activities might provide more structure, order, and better pacing.

Another concern that Carmen had when preparing for the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks* was making sure that spaces were physically accessible and that visitors were able to orient themselves within the space. Having volunteers present was significant to help visitors navigate the museum spaces. However, some visitors mentioned that they wished they had more information about the physical space they were in and the other people that were present in the room. Visitors also wanted more time to acclimate to the different activities. Carmen, John, and Allison wanted to give visitors several ways to explore and access the work by Goya, so they provided visitors with an abundance of tools and activities to engage with. Yet, based on visitor responses and their own observations, Carmen, John, and Allison realized that it might have been better to employ a smaller number of activities and spend more time on each one. Additionally, to make sure that museum spaces were navigable and that profound conversations could occur, it would be best to limit the size of the group that could attend the program even more. For the first session, Carmen allowed a little over twenty people to sign up for the program. For the second session, she restricted the group size to fifteen.

The issue discussed that had the strongest impact on the planning and realization of the second session was John's role in the program. John expressed that it was difficult for him to figure out whether people were engaged in the activities and were understanding his questions since he was unable to read facial expressions. Oftentimes during the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks*, he would ask two to three questions in a row because visitors were not responding to his first question. I noticed that visitors were actually engaged in the questions he was asking based on their body language; they simply needed more time to think before responding. Since John was unable to read their body language due to his lack of sight, it was difficult for him to perceive if visitors were not interested in the question or merely needed more time before responding.

John also felt that perhaps having more involvement from Carmen and Allison in creating curriculum for the program might be beneficial. John enjoys working with museum educators because he can present them with an idea and they can then expand on it. He thrives in environments where collaboration occurs because he believes it generates new ideas. Based on John's comments, it was decided that both Allison and Carmen should be more involved in planning lessons for the upcoming session; but also, that they should have more of a leading role during the actual sessions to aid John in the best way possible.

Planning Session

Planning for the second session of *INsights and OUTlooks* occurred on January 15, 2013. During this meeting Carmen, John, and Allison decided on the painting that

would be the focus of the gallery talk and possible activities to go with the painting. All three educators made contributions to the conversation and decided on the following:

- They would start the program in one of the rooms in the museum where food that related to the gallery talk could be served.
- If a writing manipulative was to be used, they would provide tables or clipboards to make sure visitors had a substantial writing surface.
- The work of art to be discussed would be Luis Jimenez Aranda's *Lady at the Paris Exposition*, 1889.
- Since Aranda's work is in a narrow gallery, tables could not be used for activities and the size of the group would have to be smaller than twenty visitors.
- Allison would look into getting scent strips that went with the painting and creating a texture board that matches what the figure in the painting is wearing.
- John would try to come up with possible activities once Carmen e-mailed him more information about the painting.
- Allison would develop a schedule for the night to make sure all of the logistical elements were in order.
- They would start with a verbal description of the work before asking questions about the work or discussing it.

After this meeting John, Allison, and Carmen communicated via e-mail to finalize the program and make sure everyone was in agreement. The ideas discussed in this meeting came to fruition during the second session of *INsights and OUTlooks*.

INSIGHTS AND OUTLOOKS: SECOND SESSION

Program activities and details

This session of *INsights and OUTlooks* transpired on January 31, 2013 and focused on Luis Jiménez Aranda's painting, *Lady at the Paris Exposition* (see Appendix B, Figure 3). As visitors arrived they were directed towards the chosen room in the museum and were greeted by a table filled with French pastries and coffee to correspond with the setting of the painting to be discussed. The staff encouraged visitors to help themselves to the food and take a seat at a table. Once everyone was gathered, Carmen welcomed the visitors, introduced John and Allison, and asked everyone else present to introduce him or herself. She also oriented them to the space they were in and where the restrooms were located. After Carmen's introduction, John took over and engaged visitors in a conversation about Paris. He asked visitors if they had ever been to Paris, what they associated with the city, what sounds they might hear, and what smells they might come across. Allison shared a short reading by Marcel Proust that related to the questions asked by John and what one might experience in Paris. In this reading the French author described a memory, which was triggered after eating a Madeleine at his mother's house. The point of these activities was to make visitors realize that the world is experienced through multiple senses and the same can be done for art.

Once people were done eating, they were taken to the Sculpture Plaza to explore a work of art through touch. John, once again, provided everyone with techniques for touching the sculpture to make sure they got the most from the experience. Both sighted and non-sighted visitors were equally anxious to touch the sculpture even though they had to wear gloves. The sculpture used for this session was Marino Marini's *Sculpture of a Seated Woman* (see Appendix B, Figure 4) and visitors were encouraged to pay close attention to the posture of the figure and her facial expression. Visitors were asked to focus on these aspects of the sculpture to draw comparisons between Marini's sculpture and the woman in Aranda's painting. However, there was so much chatter amongst visitors that it was difficult to talk about the sculpture so that connections could be later made in the gallery.

The gallery where Aranda's work is located was already set up with chairs for visitors to use if they liked. For this gallery discussion, the staff at the Meadows used a variety of activities and tools for visitors to explore and better understand the work at hand. The tools that had been available at the first session, such as the low vision goggles, were also available for this second session. Carmen began with a verbal description of the painting, and visitors filled in the gaps and gave their opinions of the piece. Some visitors provided details that had not been discussed in the verbal description. Since verbal descriptions are often objective and mostly descriptive, it was important for Carmen and John to give visitors a chance to share how they interpreted the piece. However, like in the first session, it was important that non-sighted visitors had enough visual information to create their own interpretations of the work. Some

background information was given about the artist and context in which the piece was painted, to initiate further interpretation.

Once the artwork had been visually described, visitors were broken up into three groups with four to five people in each group and asked to complete an activity. They were to speculate what had occurred to the woman in the painting before and after she was painted and what was actually happening at the time portrayed. Each group was assigned a time segment and conversation filled the gallery. Some groups got out of their chairs to take a closer look at the work and come up with a possible answer for their prompt. Breaking into smaller groups enabled opportunity for individuals to share ideas with each other without the room becoming too loud. Carmen and John were able to listen in on some of the conversations, and getting everyone to gather again as a whole group was simple. Conversation seemed to fade naturally and groups were asked to share their findings. The visitors came back together as a whole group and discussed their individual thoughts and how these related to those of the other members in their group. This activity also required visitors to interact with someone other than their partner, something that did not occur in the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks*.

To end the session Allison and the volunteers passed around boxes with openings big enough to fit a hand in. Inside the boxes were objects found in the painting, such as the different fabrics the woman in the painting was wearing. Visitors would feel the material inside the box and try to guess what part of the painting it belonged to without seeing the object contained within the box. Furthermore, there was a discussion of the different smells that one might encounter if they were in the painting, and scent strips

with smells that could come from elements represented in the painting were passed around. The visitors tried to guess the different smells and how these fragrances related to the work of art. For example, one of the scents was meant to evoke rain because the sky in the work by Jimenez Aranda suggests that a storm is coming, something which was not discussed by the staff or the visitors in earlier conversations. At the end of the program, visitors were given a postcard with an image of Aranda's work on it and a handout with historical information about the artwork. Visitors who were visually impaired also received an electronic copy of the handout so that the file could be converted to a format they could read or into an audio file.

The Visitors

There were a total of 10 visitors for this session of *INsights and OUTlooks*. Once again, sighted visitors came in pairs and some sighted visitors accompanied non-sighted partners. There were two visually impaired visitors and eight sighted visitors. Four of the ten visitors had also been present at the first session of the program. All the visitors were asked to provide feedback about the program, if they wished, and a follow-up e-mail containing a survey about the program was sent to them by Carmen.

John's Role

John co-taught with Carmen for this session. He was part of the planning meeting prior to the program in which he, Carmen, and Allison decided on the artwork and the gallery activities. He played an integral role at the beginning of the program by guiding visitors as they touched the sculpture, and in the gallery by asking questions about the

painting. However, he took on the role of facilitator or participant during other parts of the program that were led by Carmen or Allison.

Carmen's Role

Carmen handled all of the communications with visitors prior to and after the program. Again, visitors signed up to attend *INsights and OUTlooks* with Carmen, and she sent out an e-mail to them requesting feedback about the program. As already mentioned, she collaborated with John and Allison to select the artwork and activities for the session. During the actual program, Carmen co-taught with John and led some of the discussions and activities. She played an integral role when discussing the intricacies of the work and the history behind it; however, she became a facilitator during the activities led by John and Allison.

Allison's Role

Allison was in charge of preparing the materials for the olfactory and tactile part of the gallery activities, which were selected during the planning meeting and conversations thereafter. Prior to the program she met and instructed the volunteers on the tasks they would be helping with and gave them an overview of what would transpire. Her contributions were vital at the end of the program since she directed visitors during the olfactory and tactile activities in the gallery space. During the earlier parts of the program, she acted as facilitator to John and Carmen as they lead their respective activities.

The Volunteers

Volunteers during this session assisted Allison in setting up for the program and circulating materials to visitors. Furthermore, they helped escort visitors from one space to the next.

The Docents

I must mention that three docents were present for this session of *INsights and OUTlooks*; however, it was difficult to differentiate between docents and visitors. Docents did not take on the role of facilitators or educators, they simply participated in the discussion and activities much like the visitors did.

COMPARING THE SESSIONS

The descriptions presented previously of both sessions clearly illustrate the changes that were made by the staff. Upon beginning this study, I wanted to know if and how the education staff would be evaluating *INsights and OUTlooks* and the effects that evaluations would have on the program. It must be noted that the majority of the logistical and structural changes made between sessions were the result of the debriefing meeting. Prior to this meeting Carmen, John, and Allison reflected on the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks* and shared their thoughts on the strengths and weaknesses of the program during the meeting. Furthermore, the education staff at the Meadows also sent out a short survey via e-mail to receive audience feedback. This survey and the debriefing meeting were the tools utilized by Carmen, Allison, and John to evaluate the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks*. A comparison of both observed sessions of *INsights and*

OUTlooks revealed that survey responses from visitors and the ideas discussed during the debriefing meeting greatly impacted the structure of the second session of *INsights and OUTlooks*. The differences and similarities between the sessions are summarized in the table below.

	November 29 Session		January 31 Session	
Visitor make-up	20 visitors total		10 total	
	6 V.I.	14 sighted	2 V.I.	8 sighted
John's Role	• Led the gallery talk and created the lesson. • Collaborated with Carmen to choose artwork. • Led the art-making activity		• Co-taught the gallery talk • Decided on artworks and activities for the session with Carmen and Allison • Led the touch activity in the Sculpture Plaza	
Carmen's Role	• Handled communication with visitors • Collaborated with John to choose artwork • Acted as facilitator to John		• Co-taught the gallery talk • Decided on artworks and activities for the session with John and Allison • Led a large part of the discussion in the gallery	
Allison's Role	• Debriefed volunteers • Acted as facilitator to John		• Debriefed volunteers • Decided on artworks and activities for the session with Carmen and John • Led the olfactory and tactile activities	
Gallery talk components	• Verbal description • Black boards • Sculpture touch • Printed image of the painting • Painting activity		• Food • Sculpture touch • Verbal description • Tactile boxes • Scent strips • Historical background	

		handout
Tools offered for the V.I.	• Low vision goggles • Monoculars • Large print text • Braille documents	• Low vision goggles • Large print text • Braille documents

Table 1: Sessions 1 and 2 Compared

CONCLUSION

The data presented in this chapter was meant to give a clear overview of what transpired during the first and second sessions of *INsights and OUTlooks*. The findings from the staff meetings and a comparison of both sessions of the program revealed the importance of audience feedback and having a reflective practice. These topics are discussed further in Chapter 5. Also in Chapter 5, I present the themes that best address how the staff at the Meadows managed to create and implement a program that serves the needs of visitors with visual impairments. These themes emerged from an analysis of the observations presented in this chapter (Chapter 4), my interviews, and the public and private documents gathered throughout my research.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how the Meadows Museum is creating and implementing programming that made art accessible to visitors with visual impairments. Several themes emerged from gathering and analyzing data related to *INsights and OUTlooks* that allowed me to better understand how the staff approached and solved this problem. Through my research, I discovered that the staff had decided to make *INsights and OUTlooks* an inclusive program, meaning that it was open to visitors with and without physical disabilities. To ensure that the program met the needs of people with visual impairments, the staff relied strongly on community partnerships to implement the program. Establishing partnerships with different community members was beneficial in a number of ways. It facilitated trainings at the Meadows Museum to better equip docents, gallery attendants, and volunteers to interact with visually impaired audiences. Community partnerships were also essential in developing tools and materials that would help visitors with visual impairments access museum spaces and works of art, and in helping staff at the museum build an audience of visitors with visual impairments.

I also discovered that the staff in charge of implementing *INsights and OUTlooks* was constantly reflecting on the program and welcoming new information that would help them better serve their audience. Before they even initiated the program, the staff conducted research to learn more about visitors with visual impairments and what they desired from their museum visit. In preparing for individual sessions of *INsights and OUTlooks*, the education staff maintained open lines of communication with the program

participants and collaborated with John to ensure that they never lost sight of why the program was initiated—to offer participants, regardless of physical ability, multiple ways to access and think about works of art. In this chapter, I further discuss these findings, which emerged from an analysis of written documents, interviews, field notes, and observations related to *INsights and OUTlooks*. The themes presented are those that appeared in a combination of three data sources. For example, if one idea emerged in two inteviews and also in my field notes, it became a theme. Since my research question focuses on serving audiences with visual impairments, my discussion of these themes centers around the significance of my findings for visually impaired audiences especifically. A more in-depth discussion on how an inclusive program like *INsights and OUTlooks* benefits other audiences can be found in Chapter 6.

COLLABORATING WITH PEOPLE WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

> Carmen shared an idea to make a program that was just broader in scope than just one workshop. Something that can be ongoing and something that was more than what she would come up with and that I would come up with…to bring people in from the visually impaired community and have their ideas, not just the experts; but actual people who live everyday and have visual impairments. And have them say 'you know, I like this, I don't like this, this is cool, this isn't cool, and this doesn't help at all.' And the great thing about that is, it seems so simple, but most people, I think, just overlook that. (John Bramblitt)

As reflected in the above quote by John, staff at the Meadows Museum received a lot of information about what a program for people with visual impairments should include by talking to audiences with visual impairments. Both Allison and Carmen expressed, during their interviews, the importance of listening to and collaborating with people with visual impairments to create this program. Allison mentioned that educators

should not assume that they know what a group of people require and give that to them; instead, educators must ask visitors what they would like from their experience and take the time and effort to consider their input. Likewise, Carmen mentioned that in order to prepare for *INsights and OUTlooks* she had been "collecting information and interviewing others about what they need and what they want." Through my field observations, it became obvious that Carmen and Allison did in fact value feedback from the visually impaired community and were interested in their preferences. The first indication of this was Carmen's decision to invite John to take the lead role in designing and implementing *INsights and OUTlooks*. The second indication was asking visually impaired audiences to provide feedback regarding what the staff at the Meadows could do better to assist them.

Feedback from this audience informed the design of *INsights and OUTlooks* and was received in two phases. The first form of audience feedback came from a focus group study conducted before the first session of the program. The second form of audience feedback came when Carmen e-mailed visitors who attended the first session and asked for their opinions. The focus group informed the initial design of *INsights and OUTlooks*, and the e-mails received by visitors were responsible for some of the changes that occurred between the first and second session. In the following sections, I discuss how John's role and each form of visitor feedback influenced different aspects of the program.

Collaborating with John Bramblitt

As the staff at the Meadows prepared for *INsights and OUTlooks*, John provided his knowledge and new ideas to ensure that the program served the needs of the participants. As mentioned in Chapter 4, John had been experimenting with different techniques to make art accessible to people with special needs for years and was excited at the idea of creating a program that would serve people with visual impairments. In fact, the art-making activity used for the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks* was one that John previously developed and used for other workshops. From talking to Carmen and Allison, it became apparent that they considered John to be an integral part of their efforts in preparing for and creating a program for the visually impaired because he added something to the program that they could not have provided to visitors. For example, Allison expressed that one of the strengths of the program was that an artist who was visually impaired led it; and Carmen mentioned that John was her "barometer" and often reminded her of "what makes art relevant beyond the visual." Furthermore, Carmen stated that "when John invites people to describe what they see, they're trying really hard to describe it in a way that he can understand. And then immediately, the tenor of the whole conversation changes by having him there."

In preparing for the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks*, both John and Carmen said that they would often talk on the phone and brainstorm about the program. However, Carmen and Allison agreed that it was ultimately John's decision to focus on the painting by Goya and that they wanted John to lead the program. Based on my observations of the first session, Carmen and Allison did in fact take on the role of facilitators, as described in Chapter 4, and John led the discussions and activities in the

gallery and in the studio. For the second session of *INsights and OUTlooks*, John's role changed as he, Carmen, and Allison worked more closely in planning and leading this session. As discussed in Chapter 4, John had expressed that he wanted Carmen and Allison to take on a more active role during the actual program since he could not read visitors' facial expressions when asking questions. From this comment, the three of them decided that it would be best for all of them to co-lead the program. Although John was not the leader for the second session, he was still instrumental in the development of this session. For example, during the brainstorming session (see Chapter 4), he actively participated in the discussion and would provide feedback regarding different activities that Carmen and Allison suggested. During the actual session of *INsights and OUTlooks*, John shared different techniques with visitors on how to touch the Marini sculpture so they could make out different features and textures.

John also played an important part in preparing the staff and docents at the Meadows for working with special needs audiences. According to Carmen, he provided docents and staff with a unique experience:

> In our docent trainings…John would say 'well, what do you mean by that?' and he would prompt them in ways that would not occur to me because I'm not in his head. So the art of description is much more meaningful and…it becomes more real and relevant to the visitors and the audience or the group when they are trying to explain it to a person that's visually impaired.

Value of focus group feedback

The Meadows Museum participated in a focus group study in September 2012 as part of a larger national study supported by Art Beyond Sight/Art Education for the Blind. The purpose of this study was to gain information about how the Meadows

Museum could meet the needs of visitors with visual impairments. Both Carmen and Allison expressed that the information received from this focus group was extremely important as they prepared for *INsights and OUTlooks*. When I asked Allison what she had done to prepare for the program, she mentioned that the focus group had been part of her preparation:

> The focus group was incredibly important and informative. That was a huge preparation as part of this process. It's actually asking people who have these needs what their preferences are; and what they think of what we are trying to do, and of the tools that we have to offer and how we might better use them; and what they might want to have that we are not currently offering.

Based on Allison's comment, it is clear that the information received was valuable and helpful in creating *INsights and OUTlooks*. Furthermore, my observations of the first session also indicated that the staff did in fact use the knowledge from the focus group to ensure that the wants and needs of visually impaired audiences were met. For example, Carmen expressed that navigating spaces was a concern during the focus group since some visitors had a guide dog or a cane; therefore, she selected a gallery with ample space for the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks* and had enough volunteers present in case visitors needed guidance. For the second session of the program Carmen realized that the painting was in a small gallery space so she decided to decrease the number of participants who could sign up for this session. Carmen and Allison also learned from the focus group and from *Connections* that visitors with special needs required more time to process information and to expand their depth of understanding of individual works of art. For this reason, *INsights and OUTlooks* was designed to be a two-hour, in-depth exploration of one work of art for a small group of around fifteen visitors.

Utilizing visitor feedback

> If someone that is sighted says "Oh my goodness! The pacing was awful" or I hear from a V.I. person, "Look, I don't think this is a good thing for us, I think we need a singular program focused on our audience" then I listen. I mean I just have to collect information, go in it with an open mind. (Carmen Smith)

While the focus group was a source of invaluable information, the quote above reflects that the education staff at the Meadows Museum was conscious that they did not have all the answers and was open to altering the program if it would benefit their audience. This is also shown by the fact that Carmen invited visitors to provide suggestions about how to improve the program. Before the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks* occured, Carmen e-mailed all visitors who had reserved a spot for the program saying that the session they had signed up for was a pilot session and that she would appreciate their feedback. After the session she followed up with everyone who attended to obtain feedback and some visitors contacted her with suggestions as well. Although a lot of the visitor feedback was already discussed in Chapter 4, I mention a couple of the visitor suggestions in this section to illustrate that the staff valued visitor feedback and that this feedback helped mold the second session of *INsights and OUTlooks*.

During the debriefing session that occurred after the first session of the program, Carmen shared visitor feedback with Allison, John, and myself. One of these responses was that some visitors felt that giving the program more structure would have been useful. Allison, therefore, created an agenda for the second session and a small group activity was incorporated. The agenda (Appendix C) helped to define staff roles during the program, which resulted in better transitions from one activity to the next. During the

first session, visitors were so absorbed in individual conversations that it was difficult for the staff to get the participants' attention. The guided small group activity provided further structure since it gave visitors a designated time to talk amongst themselves, but also motivated them to return to the whole group so they could share what they discussed in their small group with everyone else. Another suggestion from program participants was to provide more art historical and contextual information about the artwork. Carmen crafted a handout with historical information about the work discussed during the second session and gave it to visitors.

CREATING INCLUSIVENESS THROUGH MULTIMODAL TECHNIQUES

> We are trying to appeal as much to the general public as to people with special needs. We want them to have, not necessarily the same experience because there's no such thing as a standardized experience…but we want to make sure that everyone is able to access the work of art through multiple modes of understanding. (Allison Bowles Davidson)

Carmen and John shared Allison's belief that incorporating multimodal or multisensory techniques into the different sessions of *INsights and OUTlooks* would benefit visitors both with and without visual impairments. All three educators discovered this through their practice in working with other special needs audiences. For example, Carmen and Allison learned that a lot of the approaches they were using during *Connections*, the museum's program for visitors with early stage dementia, also appealed to broad audiences:

> When we consider how working with special audiences makes us better teachers and it encourages us to think more creatively about how we engage our audiences, it seemed to make sense that if you are going to establish a program that

> incorporates adaptive techniques and makes the program accessible to special audiences, that it would make it better for everyone.

Furthermore, John found that a lot of the workshops he originally created for audiences with visual impairments were also enjoyable for sighted audiences and audiences with other special needs.

After observing *INsights and OUTlooks*, it was clear that creating a program that was multimodal in nature and that incorporated tools, such as low vision goggles and braille text, facilitated inclusion. For instance during the first session of the program, visitors' sense of hearing was engaged when John shared a musical piece with them while in the galleries. In the second session, visitors were given the chance to feel different textures that related to the painting and engaged their sense of smell with the scent strips. I noticed that in both sessions every visitor was involved and interested in at least one of the activities that were offered. As John eloquently explained it, multimodal programs tend to be naturally inclusive:

> People learn in different ways anyway, so if you're a completely non-disabled person…you still may learn in a different way than the person next to you. So if you're making a program that addresses that—that's visual, oral, tactile, kinesthetic—then, you're not only going to appeal to all the people that don't have a disability; but just doing that, it makes it already a lot more accessible to people that do have a disability. You're giving the information in so many different ways…that you're already bridging the gap.

FORMING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Through my observations and conversations with Carmen and Allison, I discovered that the staff at the Meadows Museum not only relied on people with visual impairments to develop *INsights and OUTlooks*, but also depended on community

members who were serving visually impaired audiences to create this program and make works of art accessible to visitors with visual impairments. As John mentioned, "Carmen did one amazing thing…from the very beginning she's bringing in people who are visually impaired and the people that serve them." These people included a national consultant in blindness and low vision; the Executive Director at Visual Aid Volunteers, Inc.; staff from Art Beyond Sight/Art Education for the Blind; and SMU students who were members of the Delta Gamma sorority. These partnerships helped the development and implementation of *INsights and OUTlooks* in a variety of ways.

First, some of these community partnerships served to educate the staff about working with visitors with visual impairments. Both Carmen and Allison felt that they had gained extremely valuable knowledge from partnering with Mary Ann Siller, National Consultant in Blindness, and with Whitney Gregory, the Executive Director at Visual Aid Volunteers, Inc.: [9]

> I am just trying to be a voracious consumer of information about this by talking to my colleagues…. I have been an art educator for almost thirty years, it's extremely humbling but inspiring to work with these audiences and to work with my colleagues because frankly, I am learning. I learn from Whitney and from Mary Ann, from John. Those are my three mentors. (Carmen Smith)

When I asked Allison what she had done to prepare for *INsights and OUTlooks*, she mentioned that plugging into professionals who were serving the community they wanted to serve helped her prepare for working with visually impaired audiences and that she considered Mary Ann, Carmen, and Whitney to be her mentors. During my research, I

[9] Visual Aid Volunteers, Inc. is a non-profit braille production center in Texas. They offer braille translation services to schools and organizations nationally. A thorough description of their services can be found at www.vavtx.org/index.htm.

communicated with Mary Ann via e-mail and found out that she conducted a national research study for the Meadows Museum in 2011. This study consisted of a series of interviews with education staff from 28 university museums across the United States. The study was conducted to determine if and how university museums were addressing special audiences in their spaces, collections, and programs. Mary Ann expressed that this study helped Carmen determine which steps to take in order to create inclusive educational programs, such as *INsights and OUTlooks*. Furthermore, Mary Ann and Whitney put together a document for the staff at the Meadows Museum explaining how to be sensitive to the needs of people with visual impairments (Appendix D). This document was distributed to the docents and staff at the museum during trainings, which were also facilitated by community partners. (Although docent and staff trainings resulted from community partnerships, these are discussed later in this chapter.)

> Community partnerships also provided tools that facilitated access to works of art: We've worked a lot with consultants from Visual Aid Volunteers to get a lot of materials and tools for gallery use to support low vision interaction [with works of art], or just trying to develop different ways of accessing artworks. (Allison Bowles Davidson)

As Allison pointed out, the education staff at the Meadows Museum partnered with Whitney Gregory, Executive Director at Visual Aid Volunteers, Inc., to develop braille materials for visitors with visual impairments to use during museum visits. These tools include tactile reproductions of works of art, braille and large-print text of labels or verbal descriptions, and tactile maps of the museum spaces. Although these tools were developed as part of the inclusion initiative, some were also available during the sessions of *INsights and OUTlooks* I observed to make museum spaces and works of art accessible

to visually impaired audiences. Whitney and the staff at Visual Aid Volunteers also developed a verbal description for the Goya painting used during the first session of the program. Verbal descriptions use nonvisual language to render the visual word and are read out loud to visitors. They often include information present in museum labels and a description of the subject matter and the composition of the work. Verbal descriptions were read out loud at both sessions of *INsights and OUTlooks* to ensure that visitors with visual impairments had an idea of what the artwork was depicting. Having a variety of tools available for visitors was extremely important to Carmen because she wanted to make sure that all the different types and levels of visual impairment were addressed during the program.

Most importantly, community partnerships helped bring in visually impaired audiences to the museum and enabled the staff to receive the focus group and visitor feedback, which was discussed earlier in this chapter. Prior to partnering with Mary Ann and Whitney, Carmen had not had much success in bringing in visually impaired audiences to the museum:

> I developed this little workshop…where you create a public program and then you incorporate adaptive techniques for the visually impaired, but I didn't have any visually impaired audiences. One of the attendees was Mary Ann Siller…and she clearly stated that she believed art in fact is a universal language and that we can make this place relevant to V.I. [visually impaired] audiences. (Carmen Smith)

Through partnering with Mary Ann Siller, Carmen was able to reach audiences with visual impairments and work with them to create *INsights and OUTlooks*. This collaboration with visually impaired audiences began with the September focus group, which was the result of partnering with Art Beyond Sight/Art Education for the Blind.

Mary Ann, having worked and built a relationship with communities with visual impairments, was able to disseminate information about the focus group and invite visitors with visual impairments from the Dallas/Fort Worth area to be part of it. Carmen expressed that Mary Ann "could probably fill the galleries every week. She just knows so many people and they are incredibly receptive." I was present at the focus group and it became apparent that these visitors knew and trusted Mary Ann.

Furthermore, a lot of the visitors who participated in the focus group were at the first and second session of *INsights and OUTlooks*. Some of these visitors also provided Carmen with feedback regarding the program and how the Meadows Museum could better accommodate their needs; all of which was discussed previously in this chapter. Carmen was able to bring visitors with visual impairments to the museum due to her collaboration with Mary Ann, but then build relationships with them. These relationships became apparent since, at the time of my research, Carmen was communicating with these visitors and sending them information about upcoming events herself as opposed to having to use Mary Ann as a liaison.

Community partnerships were also important in supporting the staff during actual sessions of *INsights and OUTlooks*. Mary Ann and Whitney were present at the first session and brought materials that supported low vision interaction with works of art. For example, Mary Ann brought monoculars for visitors to use. During the observed sessions of the program, the education staff also relied on volunteers to direct visitors from one space to the next, pass out materials, and facilitate gallery and art-making activities. Furthermore, Carmen wanted to give visually impaired visitors the option to partner with

a docent or volunteer for the duration of the program in case the visitor wanted guidance during the gallery activities or as they navigated the museum. To facilitate these interactions, the education staff at the Meadows Museum partnered with members of the Delta Gama Sorority on SMU's campus and provided a training for them to teach these college students about addressing the needs of visitors with visual impairments. Service for Sight is Delta Gamma's national philanthropy, which means that each member's service hours have to relate to serving blind and visually impaired communities. Partnering with Delta Gamma ensured that there were enough volunteers at both sessions to meet all the visitors' needs, and also helped members of Delta Gamma complete some of their service hours. Allison expressed that working with volunteers was extremely important because they would need more support as *INsights and OUTlooks* grew and moved forward.

OFFERING STAFF AND DOCENT TRAININGS

Carmen, Allison, and John expressed that it was important for visitors to feel comfortable when visiting the museum. Carmen wanted docents and staff to be prepared to interact with visitors with visual impairments by "being friendly and making them feel comfortable," and she thought preparing docents and staff to address special needs audiences was one of the biggest challenges she faced. To achieve this, several trainings were offered at the Meadows Museum to educate docents and the Visitor Services Department about how to work with special needs audiences. Amanda Blake, Head of Family, Access, and School Experiences at the Dallas Museum of Art, conducted the first

training about a year and a half prior to the start of *INsights and OUTlooks*. This training focused on the language used to address special needs audiences. According to Carmen, this training was an indication to the docents that they were headed towards serving visitors with special needs and she wanted the docents to be open to the idea of incorporating techniques and language that were inclusive of special needs audiences into their knowledge base.

Mary Ann and Whitney led a second, two-day training session in November prior to the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks*. The first day of the training occurred on November 5, 2012 and focused on how to address audiences with visual impairments, how to use tools like braille, and how to facilitate conversations in front of works of art. The second part of this training took place on November 12, 2012. Docents were introduced to verbal descriptions and John was invited to facilitate this conversation. Carmen mentioned that John contributed by sharing his own experiences and talking about how important description was for him in order to understand works of art. Prior to the second session of *INsights and OUTlooks*, members of Art Beyond Sight/Art Education for the Blind led the third training in January. This was also a two-day training session that docents and staff, as well as other museum educators from the Dallas area, were invited to attend. The training was a disability awareness training session; a session that introduced multi-sensory accessibility tools, such as touch objects, tactile graphics, sound and drama, and verbal description; and a session that focused solely on verbal description exercises in the galleries. The verbal description session occurred on the second day and was only open to docents. For the disability awareness training session,

Carmen put together a panel of people with blindness or low vision so that docents and staff could get immediate feedback to questions that came up. For the verbal description exercises, John was present to provide docents with comments about the verbal descriptions they created. After this third training was over, Carmen admitted that the second day of training was a difficult one for the staff present and the docents: "We experienced every emotion—from anger and resistance at the beginning of the day, to tears of gratitude from true 'conversos' [converts] at the end; a painful, albeit necessary process for all of us."

Through my observations, it became clear why Carmen was so concerned with providing proper training for the docents and staff. I attended the September focus group, which occurred before any training had been offered on how to interact with visually impaired audiences, and the docents who helped facilitate the focus group seemed nervous and hesitant to interact with visually impaired participants. I remember them talking to Carmen before any of the participants arrived, and they had many questions about how to interact with these visitors and were worried about offending them or making a mistake. However, docents who attended the second session of *INsights and OUTlooks* were more at ease and gracefully blended with the rest of the audience. They immediately engaged in conversation with visitors as they were enjoying coffee and pastries. Frankly, I had to ask Carmen to point out the docents for me because I was unable to tell them apart from museum visitors. This second session occurred after the trainings with Whitney, Mary Ann, and Art Beyond Sight staff. Furthermore, the verbal description training led by Art Beyond Sight equipped docents and education staff with

the necessary tools to create their own verbal descriptions without having to rely on Visual Aid Volunteers to write them. In fact, the verbal description that was read aloud during the second session of *INsights and OUTlooks* was written by one of the docents (Appendix C).

CREATING ACCESSIBILITY

When visiting museums, John expressed that he is often concerned with the accessibility of spaces:

> Well you can't touch, but for me, going in I know that you can't touch and I always bring somebody with me that can describe…sometimes that [the size of spaces] comes into play because I'm wide with Echo [his guide dog], so I don't want to hit anything.

Ensuring that museum spaces and works of art were accessible to visitors with visual impairments was something that Carmen was also concerned with and deemed to be extremely important in preparing for *INsights and OUTlooks*. Carmen sees accessibility as a necessary component in creating an inclusive program; therefore, "making the spaces and the programs, through adaptive techniques, accessible was a key thing." For the staff at the Meadows, being accessible meant offering tools and accommodations that enabled visitors to navigate the museum spaces and access visual elements of works of art. For example, low vision goggles, monoculars, and braille text and large print text were available for visitors with low vision to use during *INsights and OUTlooks*. Verbal descriptions that described the visual elements of the works of art were also read out loud during both sessions of the program to further provide access to the visual elements of the work. As mentioned previously, trained volunteers were present at both sessions to

ensure that visitors who needed help navigating a space had someone to guide them. During the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks*, I noticed that a lot of the visitors with visual impairments were using the monoculars, and a couple of them preferred that volunteers guide them up the stairs or to the elevator as opposed to navigating on their own.

CONCLUSIONS

The themes presented in this chapter emerged from my interviews, my field observations, documents collected, and e-mail communications related *to INsights and OUTlooks*. These themes reveal how the education staff at the Meadows Museum designed and implemented the program in a manner that served the needs of visitors with visual impairments. These themes also reveal some of the challenges the staff had to overcome before and after the formation of *INsights and OUTlooks* to ensure that the needs of visitors with visual impairments were met. Furthermore, an analysis of these themes demonstrated how developing a program for visitors with visual impairments benefitted the staff at the Meadows and visitors without special needs. These are discussed further in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

This study was conducted to better understand how art museum educators can create programs that facilitate interactions between visitors with visual impairments and works of art. For this study I focused on documenting the efforts of the education staff at the Meadows Museum of Art as they planned for and implemented their first gallery series—*INsights and OUTlooks*—designed to serve visitors with visual impairments. Focusing on *INsights and OUTlooks* was appropriate for this case study because it enabled me to observe the education staff as they created their first inclusive program in an attempt to serve visually impaired audiences, and to learn more about the decisions the staff made to welcome this audience to the museum and the motivations behind these decisions.

To answer my research questions, I observed the first two sessions of *INsights and OUTlooks* ever offered at the Meadows Museum and two staff meetings related to these sessions—a debriefing meeting and a brainstorming meeting. I recorded observations in the form of field notes, conducted interviews, and gathered private and public documents relating to the program. An analysis of the data collected resulted in the themes presented in Chapter 5 of this thesis. These themes answered my first question—how is the staff at the Meadows Museum of Art designing and implementing programming that makes art accessible to visitors with visual impairments? The data presented in Chapter 4 helped answer my second set of questions—how is the staff at the Meadows Museum evaluating the successes and shortcomings of the program? If evaluations are present, how do these affect the design and implementation of the

program? How evaluation affected the program was also addressed in Chapter 5 within the *Utilizing Visitor Feedback* section.

Through my research I mainly sought to gather information about how the education staff prepared for *INsights and OUTlooks* and the steps they took to ensure that this program served the needs of visitors with visual impairments. However, since the program is inclusive, I was also interested in learning more about what approaches the staff were utilizing to serve visitors with and without visual impairments, how they came up with these approaches, and why they believed these to be relevant to serving the needs of both. I was also curious to see how these approaches fit into existing literature regarding art museums and visitors with visual impairments and other special needs. How my findings relate to the larger field of art education and how these findings can be expanded through further research is the focus of this chapter.

CREATING A PROGRAM INCLUSIVE OF VISITORS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

My study of *INsights and OUTlooks* revealed important findings not only about creating programs for visitors with visual impairments, but also about implementing an inclusive program that could simultaneously serve visitors with and without physical disabilities. The education staff at the Meadows Museum managed to create a program that served the needs of both types of visitors through a variety of ways. They utilized concepts of inclusion, Universal Design, and multimodal learning to inform the design of *INsights and OUTlooks*. To ensure that the program was beneficial to the audience they were serving, the education staff at the Meadows conducted research about the

audience's needs and wants and listened to what they had to say. In addition, the education staff's disposition as they planned and implemented *INsights and OUTlooks* was essential to the realization of this program. In the following sections I discuss the importance of these findings as they relate to this study and to the larger field of art education.

Utilizing concepts of inclusion and Universal Design

My observations of *INsights and OUTlooks* revealed that the education staff at the Meadows Museum of Art effectively created an inclusive program that serves the needs of visitors with and without visual impairments. The fact that this program was designed to be inclusive is important for several reasons. First, it supports a view that inclusive programming in art museums is possible, something that art educators and visually impaired audiences advocate (Andrus, 1999; McGinnis, 2007; Reich et al., 2011). If inclusion within the art museum is possible and research demonstrates that visitors with visual impairments are asking for this type of program, then art museum educators should look into offering programs like *INsights and OUTlooks* at their institutions. Instead of limiting visitors with visual impairments and other special needs audiences by creating programs that are exclusive only to them, art museum educators should give these audiences a variety of programs to attend and the option to form part of the general public (McGinnis, 2007; Reich et al., 2011). This can be achieved by creating a new program that is inclusive like the education staff at the Meadows Museum did or by making existing programs inclusive. After all, if the general public can choose between attending

a gallery talk, a workshop, or exploring the museum on their own, why can't people with disabilities have a similar range of options?

The staff at the Meadows Museum has begun to address this issue through their inclusion initiative. Under this initiative Carmen and the staff at the Meadows Museum are exploring ways they can provide visitors with disabilities access to similar opportunities that people without disabilities have access to; *INsights and OUTlooks* is just one example of the type of program that can stem from this initiative. Existing legislation related to people with disabilities and beliefs held by disability rights advocates would align with the belief that creating inclusive programs and spaces that are physically and cognitively accessible to all should be considered by staff at art museums (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990; Funk, 1987; Swain, et al., 2004). This view aligns with the concept of Universal Design; a concept that art museum educators are beginning to explore as a possible solution to creating programs and spaces that benefit visitors with and without disabilities (Imrie, 2004; McGinnis, 2007). Through the inclusion initiative the staff at the Meadows Museum is applying concepts of Universal Design to their practice by creating programs and educational tools that provide all visitors, regardless of ability, with the opportunity to participate and engage with art. My study of *INsights and OUTlooks* is only one example of how this museum has started to explore the concepts of inclusion and Universal Design, something that is missing from the literature (McGinnis, 2007).

Benefits of multimodal teaching

Another element that made *INsights and OUTlooks* successful and that could benefit programs at other museums was the use of multimodal teaching techniques. Carmen wanted all the visitors, sighted and non-sighted alike, to have an experience that was meaningful and engaging and decided that incorporating multimodal techniques was the best way to achieve this. The success of this decision was apparent during both sessions of *INsights and OUTlooks* as I noticed that all visitors were interested in at least one of the activities offered. During the second session of the program, some visitors enjoyed the smell strips activity while others were more involved during the small group activity in which they had to speculate about past, present, and future events that occurred in the life of the lady in the painting. A multimodal program is beneficial in that it allows educators to appeal to a larger audience and the learning opportunities available to visitors grow. This is due to the fact that everyone learns through different modalities and how the senses are combined can impact our perceptions and learning (McGinnis, 2007). As John mentioned in his interview, some people learn better through movement while others are more interested in activities that require listening. This became apparent during the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks*. When I observed the program participants who were visually impaired, I noticed that some of them were very interested in the verbal description while others relied heavily on tactile representations of the work of art to access the visual elements. However, some of the activities designed with visually impaired visitors in mind also proved to be beneficial to sighted visitors. During both sessions of the program, sighted visitors were eager to touch the sculptures, something which is usually only available for visitors with visual impairments. In addition, as

mentioned previously, the art-making activity from the first session was originally designed by John as a workshop for people with visual impairments; and yet, sighted visitors truly enjoyed the activity. This goes to show that utilizing the sense of touch is not only valued by those with visual impairments, but can benefit other audiences as well. *INsights and OUTlooks* provides support that, as McGinnis (2007) argues, incorporating multisensory techniques into exhibitions and programs can benefit all visitors because they provide the same information through various modalities. Once again, we see the concept of Universal Design at play and how all visitors can benefit from programs that engage the full range of senses to teach them about art (McGinnis, 2007).

A multimodal program like *INsights and OUTlooks* is beneficial to all audiences, but it provides some unique opportunities to visitors with visual impairments. Art museum educators are being encouraged to rethink how they serve visually impaired audiences in ways that go beyond a guided touch tour (Candlin, 2003; Hetherington, 2000). Touch tours can be problematic because they are exclusive in that they are open only to visitors with visual impairments, and they limit the range of subjects and artworks that can be explored (Candlin, 2003). Research has shown that visitors with visual impairments attend art museums because of both the social and educational opportunities they offer (Reich et al., 2011). The structure of *INsights and OUTlooks* facilitates interactions amongst visitors, staff, and friends or family who accompany them while still providing the opportunity to learn. Many of the program participants who were visually impaired brought a partner with them, and both of them were able to participate, something which might not have occurred had this been a Touch Tour. In addition, the

education staff at the Meadows Museum gave visitors who attended the sessions the opportunity to access both three-dimensional and two-dimensional works of art. Unlike touch tours, a multimodal educational program like *INsights and OUTlooks* gives education staff and visitors the freedom to explore any work of art in a museum's collection alongside friends, family, and other visitors.

Get to know and listen to your audience

Preparing and training for this program was a long and extensive process for Carmen and Allison, and one that is ongoing. Moreover, it is a necessary process to ensure that museum educators who want to serve special needs audiences are offering programs that these visitors value (Reich et al., 2011), a point with which I concur. My interviews with Carmen and Allison revealed that they were extremely knowledgeable about the audience they were serving. For example, Carmen was aware of the different levels of visual impairments and she addressed these by offering a variety of tools that facilitate seeing such as binoculars, braille text, and tactile representations of artworks. Some of the publications related to making art accessible to visitors with visual impairments emphasize the importance of knowing about the types of visual impairments and the appropriate tools to utilize with each type to facilitate seeing (Axel & Levent, 2003; De Coster & Loots, 2004). In addition, my data revealed that many of the decisions surrounding *INsights and OUTlooks* resulted from extensive audience research conducted by Carmen and Allison, and from their willingness to construct the program based on what worked best for visitors. Museum educators would greatly benefit from

involving visually impaired audiences as they create new programs to determine which tools and approaches work best to make art accessible to this particular audience (Axel & Levent, 2003; Reich et al., 2011). The Meadows Museum did this by conducting the focus group prior to the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks* and by forming community partnerships with people who were already serving visually impaired audiences. Establishing these community partnerships provided Carmen and Allison with knowledge about visually impaired audiences and access to tools that serve these audiences. Carmen then had the opportunity to receive feedback about the tools that had been created when the focus group was conducted prior to the start of *INsights and OUTlooks*. This formative evaluation enabled her to assess the existing tools, like tactile representations and verbal descriptions of artworks, and determine possible problems they might encounter with each tool, while giving her enough time to alter the tools before the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks*.[10]

John, Carmen, and Allison were mindful of the fact that they were trying to serve both sighted and visually impaired visitors and wanted to hear from both of them regarding the program. When Carmen desired feedback regarding the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks*, she asked everyone who attended the program for feedback and not just those who were visually impaired. When creating programs for different audiences museum educators must realize that all visitors, regardless of ability, have different backgrounds, learning styles, and interests, which will affect what they are

[10] Formative assessment occurs when teachers take information provided by students related to learning processes and utilize it to adapt their teaching to meet the students needs (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Heritage, 2010).

interested in and how they want to access information (Reich et al., 2011). For this reason Carmen's decision to learn more about the audience she was serving and make changes to the program based on their feedback was invaluable and essential when creating this program. This is something other museum educators should consider doing if they want to create a program that is meaningful and relevant to a particular audience (Reich et al., 2011). Most importantly, the feedback that Carmen received from visitors actually affected the second session of *INsights and OUTlooks* as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. When comparing the first and second session of *INsights and OUTlooks* one can see the impact that summative assessment of an educational program can have.[11] Asking visitors who attended the program what was beneficial to them and what was not provided Carmen, John, and Allison with information used to modify their teaching strategies from one session to the next to ensure that program participants were profiting from the experience.

Staff's attitude towards serving visually impaired audiences

As part of the inclusion initiative Carmen wanted to make sure that her staff and docents were prepared to welcome special needs audiences to the museum and offered the trainings discussed in previous chapters to achieve this. Through my background research (McGinnis, 2007; Reich et al., 2011), I discovered that staff at museums can impact visitors by making their experience one that is either negative or positive. Ensuring that museum staff who interact with the public are able to make them feel

[11] Summative evaluation is typically carried out to assess the overall worth of educational staff, programs, and products (Ravitch, 2007).

welcome and comfortable is essential. Furthermore, one of the main complaints museum visitors with visual impairments have is that they feel unwelcome because the staff often chastises them for getting too close to works of art or staff members simply do not know how to help these visitors navigate the spaces (Reich et al., 2011). Offering sensitivity trainings for the staff and docents at the Meadows Museum was an important step in ensuring that the interactions between visitors with visual impairments and the staff were positive. Visitors with visual impairments often enjoy interactions with docents and staff members who are knowledgeable and willing to help (Reich et al., 2011). Docents were not present at the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks,* but during the second session of the program docents engaged with all visitors during the small group activity in the galleries. Coincidentally, the second session of *INsights and OUTlooks* occurred after docents attended the Art Beyond Sight training offered at the museum where they were taught how to interact with visually impaired audiences and how to produce verbal descriptions. Based on my observations of this program and what has been said in other publications, docent and staff trainings related to serving special needs audiences can greatly benefit museums and appears to be essential in making special needs audiences feel welcome.

While docent and staff trainings were important to ensure that they were able to approach special needs audience in a confident and friendly manner, Carmen's positive attitude and humble leadership were vital in ensuring that visitors felt welcome and valued. She was unassuming and eager to learn from others as she reached out to visually impaired audiences. Furthermore, she was well aware that it might take more than a

couple sessions to figure out how to structure *INsights and OUTlooks* so that visitors could gain the most from their experience. She was determined, however, to do so no matter how many attempts it took. Most importantly, Carmen, along with John and Allison, created this program for the right reasons.

McGinnis (2007) and Andrus (1999) assert that the museum staff in charge of creating programs and exhibition spaces that are appropriate for special needs audiences must have the right attitude, meaning that they should do so not because the law mandates it or to receive funding, but because inclusion is the moral thing to do. As many (Blandy, 1991; Funk, 1987; Hahn, 1987; Swain, et al., 2004) have argued, individuals with disabilities must be treated equal to those without disabilities; this implies that all environments should be equally accessible, physically and cognitively, to all peoples. Carmen's desire to welcome visitors with visual impairments to the Meadows Museum emerged because she saw that there was a need in the community for this type of programming, and she was willing to make necessary accommodations to ensure that people with visual impairments who wanted to visit the museum could do so. Her attitude in designing the program serves as one example of how museum educators should think and act if they truly desire to create programs that special needs audiences want to attend.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study focused mostly on the efforts of the education staff at the Meadows Museum. Although I did have some access to visitor feedback, gathering the opinions of visitors who attend *INsights and OUTlooks* could expand this study. Furthermore,

INsights and OUTlooks is an ongoing educational program, but this study focused only on the first two sessions. I recommend conducting a longitudinal, more comprehensive study of *INsights and OUTlooks* to identify problems that might arise over time and how the staff handles them. This could further expand the findings from this study and provide valuable information for museum educators about the challenges they might face when creating programs for visitors with visual impairments and maintaining these programs over time. One could also conduct a visitor survey that looks at the different methods and approaches the staff utilizes to determine which methods appear to be more effective and, therefore, expand the existing knowledge about appropriate tools and techniques to use with this audience.

Visitors were invited to touch sculptures during both observed sessions of *INsights and OUTlooks*. However, the conversations surrounding these pieces were not as profound as those that happened with the paintings. When I talked to Carmen, she was clear in stating that the sculptures had been carefully chosen and related to the themes being explored during each session, but this reason for selection was lost during the actual program. Many of the visitors were excited to experience the works of art through touch so it is something worth including in the program. Action research could be conducted to explore how elements of touch tours can be better incorporated into the program.

The topic of inclusion in museums is of strong interest to me. As my research progressed, I was curious to see how the education staff would make accommodations for visitors with visual impairments and also manage to engage sighted visitors during

INsights and OUTlooks. I believe the education staff was able to provide all the visitors with an enjoyable experience; however, a comparative case study could be conducted to determine if inclusive programs better meet the needs of non-special needs audiences than non-inclusive programs. The sessions I observed of *INsights and OUTlooks* had repeat sighted visitors in attendance; these visitors could be surveyed to better understand their motivations for attending this program as opposed to non-inclusive programs.

I was impressed by the effect that the sensitivity training had on the docents at the Meadows Museum. Based on my conversations with Carmen and my observations, I gathered that docents were somewhat resistant to experiment with multimodal techniques and creating verbal descriptions at first. However, by the end of the training they seemed to be open to learning how to welcome and accommodate the needs of special needs audiences who visited the museum. A qualitative case study could be conducted to see how docent interactions with special needs audiences during tours and other educational programs differ before and after trainings like those offered at the Meadows Museum. This could help museum educators better understand what types of training need to be offered so that interactions between visitors and museum staff are positive, and so that docents are prepared to lead tours that meet the needs of visitors, regardless of their ability.

One could conduct comparative case studies to expand on how working with artists or professionals with special needs can impact the museum and its visitors. In this study I discussed John's role and the effect he had on the staff, but I did not research the effect he had on those who attended *INsights and OUTlooks*. A study of this sort could

add to the existing literature that focuses on how art museums can be places of social change and create environments that challenge visitors to rethink the topic of what it means to be disabled (Garland-Thomson, 2010; McGinnis, 2007; Sandell & Dodd, 2010). By welcoming visitors with special needs, the staff and docents at the Meadows Museum gained new perspectives on what it means to have a disability and how to enable people with special needs to feel welcome. It is possible that inclusive programs could have a similar effect on the general public as they interact with people with disabilities. Oftentimes, when talking to visitors who attended *INsights and OUTlooks* about John, they are amazed by the fact that he is a painter who is blind. One could conduct an ethnographic study to trace how the perspectives of sighted visitors towards people with visual impairments change after they attend *INsights and OUTlooks* to see if museums can, in fact, offer audiences new ways of perceiving disability.

CONCLUSION

The education staff at the Meadows Museum partnered with an artist who is blind and created an inclusive program in their attempt to meet the needs and wants of visitors with visual impairments. The result was a program that successfully integrated special needs audiences with the general public and addressed some of the issues that museum educators are currently facing as they welcome special needs audiences to their institutions. Most importantly, an innovative program like *INsights and OUTlooks* challenges museum educators to rethink how they create programs, not just for visually impaired audiences, but also for all audiences. As a future museum educator, I feel a

responsibility to create programs that welcome visitors of all abilities because I believe that everyone should have equal access to works of art and the experiences that only art museums can provide. If multimodal learning and teaching is beneficial to all audiences regardless of ability and can facilitate meaningful connections between visitors and works of art, why are we not utilizing these for all programs and spaces? This study has shown how one art museum utilized multimodal teaching techniques to accommodate the needs of visually impaired audiences; however, the exploration of this topic should not end here. Instead, I hope it encourages staff members at other art museums to begin or continue to explore ways in which their programs and spaces can better serve all audiences, regardless of ability, and how their institutions might become places that challenge visitors' perceptions and incite social change.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The questions presented below are questions from the interviews conducted with Carmen Smith, Allison Bowles Davidson, and John Bramblitt.

Interview questions for Carmen and Allison:

- How did you first become interested in starting a program for visitors with visual impairments?
- What were some of the challenges to starting these programs?
- What do you hope to learn from the first session of *INsights and OUTlooks*?
- What is your vision for the program and how does it fit into the larger educational values of the museum?
- How are you preparing for the program? What other programs have you looked at? Current literature? Trainings?
- What are some of the challenges you have faced as you plan *INsights and OUTlooks*?
- How do you plan to evaluate the successes or shortcomings of the program, if at all?
- What type of tools or techniques are you implementing during the program?
- Why do you think it's important that the Meadows Museum serve visitors with visual impairments?
- What advice would you give other art museum educators who want to welcome people with visual impairments into their museum?

Interview questions of John Bramblitt:

- When did you first start working with art museums and what drew you to them?
- What opinions did you have about art museums in relation to serving visitors with visual impairments prior to working with these institutions?

- Have your opinions about museums and how they serve the visually impaired population changed as you have worked with art museums?

- How did you begin working with the Meadows Museum of Art?

- Why did you decide to participate in this program?

- How involved are you in the planning of *INsights and OUTlooks*?

- What do you hope to contribute to the program?

- How are you preparing for the first session?

- What other programs have you been a part of at the Meadows Museum of Art?

- What do you think is the value of making art accessible to people who are visually impaired?

- What do you think will be some of the main challenges for making art accessible to the participants of *INsights and OUTlooks*?

- What are some of the challenges you have faced when visiting art museums or programs designed for the visually impaired?

APPENDIX B: ARTWORKS

Figure 1: *Yard with Madmen* (1794) by Francisco Jose de Goya y Lucientes

This image has been reproduced with the permission of the Meadows Museum of Art.

Francisco Jose de Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828)
Yard with Madmen (Corral de Locos)
1794
Oil on tin-plated iron
Algur H. Meadows Collection, 67.01

Figure 2: *Eve in Despair* (1915) by Auguste Rodin

This image has been reproduced with the permission of the Meadows Museum of Art.

Auguste Rodin (French, 1840-1917)
Eve in Despair
1915
Marble
68 x 30 x 34 inches
Elizabeth Meadows Sculpture Collection 69.06

Figure 3: *Lady at the Paris Exposition* (1889) by Luis Jimenez Aranda

This image has been reproduced with the permission of the Meadows Museum of Art.

Luis Jimenez Aranda (1845-1928)
Lady at the Paris Exposition
1889
Algur H. Meadows Collection 69.24

Figure 4: *Crouching Woman* (1934) by Marino Marini

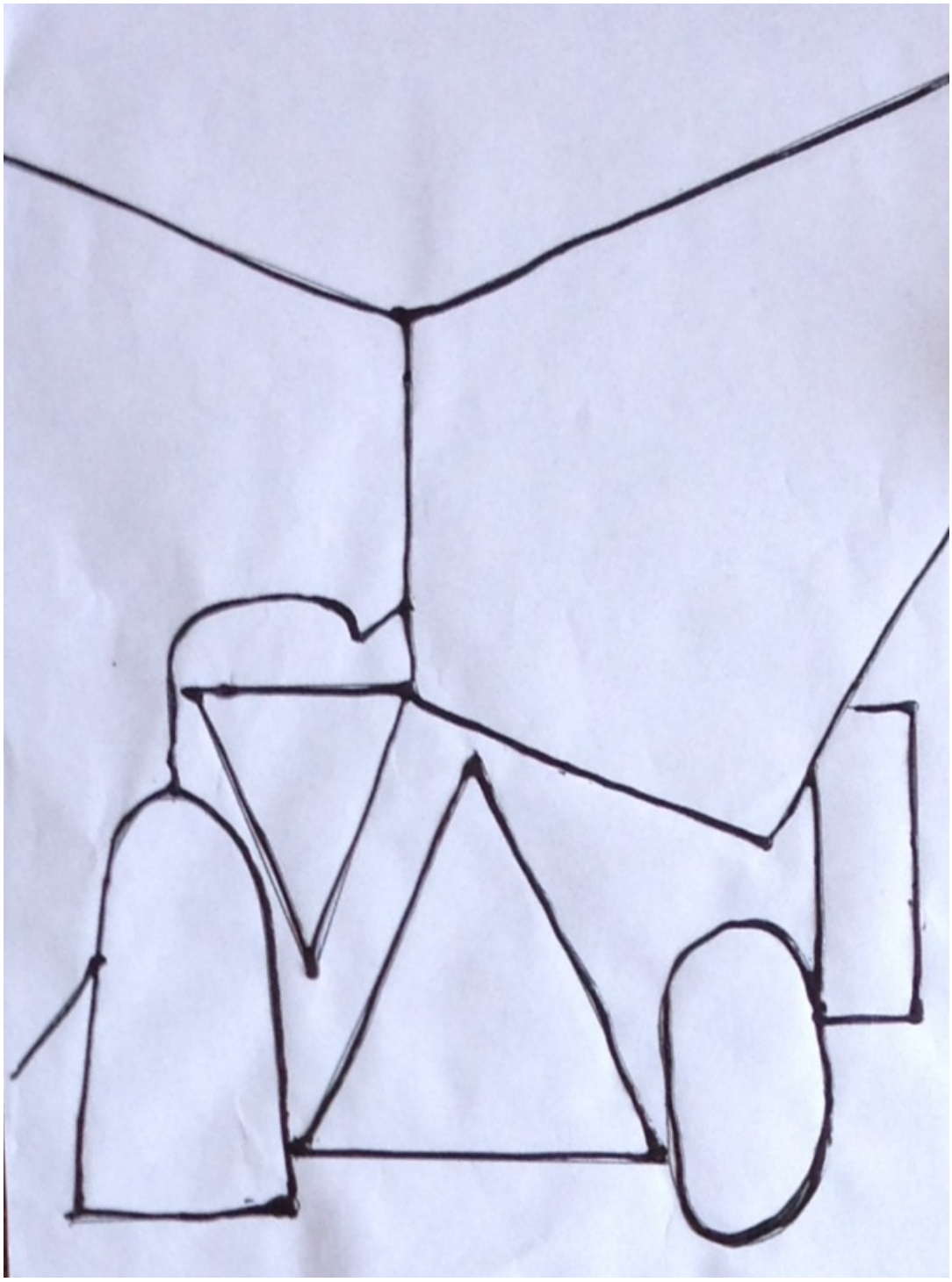
This image has been reproduced with the permission of the Meadows Museum of Art.

Marino Marini (1901-1980)
Crouching Woman
1934
Bronze
Elizabeth Meadows Sculpture Collection, MM.1965.39

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE MATERIALS USED IN SESSIONS 1 AND 2

Figure 5: Printed Image of Goya Painting with Compositional Shapes

Figure 6: Puff Paint Compositions for Art Making Activity



Agenda for Second Session of *INsights and OUTlooks* created by Allison

Insights and Outlooks 01/31/13
Start in Gates (30 minutes)
Introductions and Orientations: Carmen

- To the physical space
- To the program and the museum
- To the agenda for the night
- To each other/self intros of group

During this time we will set the scene, Paris 1889, with olfactory and taste sensory stimulation (French snacks from La Madeleine and period French music). We will also have time for latecomers to join and for all the participants to visit, meet volunteers and relax a bit.

Questions to help set the scene and mindset: John

- Has anyone here been to Paris? (report response by show of hands and out loud; should make more effort to identify who is speaking when we receive responses)
- What do you think of when you think of Paris? What about 1889 Paris?
- What would you want to do if you returned to Paris or went there for the first time?

Proust reading here.

Sculpture Plaza (10 minutes): Introduction to the activity and touching: John
Pass out gloves in GATES
Touch Tour
Marini Sculpture of Seated Woman
Questions for Discussion:

- What can we tell about this sculpture?
    - Body language
    - Emotions
    - Her story
    - How it was made
- Remember your impressions of this figure's mood for comparison later… to the figure in the painting we are about to discuss at length

Aranda Painting, Lady at Paris Exposition (50 minutes? Or remainder of our time)

1. Visual Description Activity
    a. Gallery space orientation (describe physical surroundings and art)
    b. Begin with the very basics of what we see in the painting

c. Read the prepared visual description slowly. This fills in the compositional details in an organized, methodical way.
d. Pause at intervals during the description to ask what we missed, solicit description from the group: What am I missing? What more do you see?
e. Invite questions: What more do you want to know about what it looks like? What information do you need to know?
f. Before, During, After Activity (John, Carmen, Me: Each take a group)
    i. This activity emphasizes the influence of the early development of photography on the style of the painting. As it captures a moment in time or the distillation of a moment. It also sparks narrative exposition.
    ii. What happened right before this moment?
    iii. What is happening now?
    iv. What is just about to happen?

        The questions above can be assigned to different pairs or groups and they can discuss amongst themselves. Then share answers for each question by turns.
g. Do you have any impressions from this painting based on the information we have so far? Or more questions?
h. We should feel free to volunteer historical information and context as questions arise, but focus more on the content of the art until we get to this point. Now we might actively explore those areas of discussion for a while.

2. Olfactory Description Activity
    a. Ask participants to smell the scent on a strip of paper
        i. What associations does the smell evoke?
        ii. Are there any connections to the content of the art?
        iii. Repeat the process with other scents. Collect used strips of paper before passing out new scent strips to avoid smell confusion, and circulate coffee beans to cleanse the olfactory palette in between scent courses.
    b. Invite questions again. What more information do you need to put this work of art together or to get to know it even better?

3. Tactile Description Activity

(More is suggested here than we might have time for, just putting options out there)

    a. Pass out tactile aids (I would have to create these ahead of time, maybe try to get some DGs or docents to help)
    b. Textural details will aid in tactile description of the appearance of the figure in the painting. I would affix fabrics of appropriately descriptive textures to the image of the figure in the corresponding shapes of her clothing. This tool offers a sense of the textural details and where they appear in the composition of the painting.

c. Leads to a discussion of how the artist realizes textural details in 2Dimensions, specifically on the figure's clothing. And maybe what these textural details mean in terms of interpretation.
d. Textures to be represented would include brocade lace, satin ribbon, taffeta, velvet and something like patent leather.
e. Eiffel Tower is a little over 1,000 feet high, about 100 stories tall
f. Alternatively we could just give out samples of textures affixed to boards and discuss their location in the painting relative to other elements.
g. We can also circulate objects that appear in the painting for tactile description, such as a model of the Eiffel Tower, newspaper, umbrella, glove and beer mug.

4. Discussion prompts that can be used at any time:
    a. Who is she? What is she doing? What is her emotional state? How does this figure compare to the sculpture we explored through touch? Similarities, Differences?
    b. Multiple perspectives? Architects in the house? Other ideas?
    c. Landscape, Still Life, Portrait
        i. Ask for definitions of each of the terms above from the group and add information to each if necessary.
        ii. What category should this painting belong to? (Kind of a trick question. There are elements of all three in the work.)
        iii. Ask for information to back up their answers that comes from the CONTENT of the painting itself.

Conclusion
Sum up everything we did and ask for observations, questions or other ideas.
Post cards for parting gifts.
Carmen's info sheets

Verbal Description written by docent:

A fashionably-dressed young woman is standing with her body facing you on a balcony overlooking the Eiffel Tower and, prominently among several other buildings in the background, the shining domed central pavilion of the Paris International Exhibition of 1889. Her left foot is placed closer to you than her right foot and she may be leaning her hips back against a balcony railing that runs from left to right across the scene. Also on the balcony between you and the woman are three cafe chairs of curved metal with round seats. One is to her left facing her (5 o'clock position) on which a blue-bound book with gilt edged paper resides on the seat; two are partially under a round cafe table on her right side (7 to 8 o'clock positions). On the table are a nearly full mug of beer and a folded newspaper. The chairs have metal legs of a light gold color that are bent in the French cabriole style. The chairs, table, and woman are standing on what appears to be a polished concrete floor.

She is wearing a luxurious light blue, shiny, silk-like full skirt that extends down to her ankles, revealing dainty feet clad in shiny black pointed shoes. The skirt, on her left side facing you, has a light, soft green pastel strip of vertical lace that flares from about two inches at her waist to four inches wide at the hem of the skirt. She is wearing a long-sleeved navy blue jacket of a brushed velvet-like fabric that is open in the front and cut to emphasize her trim waist. Her white blouse under the jacket has a gauzy, delicate texture and it drapes very slightly. Her left arm is extended in a curved manner and her gloved hand is grasping a long red parasol. Her right arm is curved such that her wrist and hand, which loosely grasps her other glove, are resting upon her right hip about 10 to 12 inches below her waist. On her head is perched a round hat that matches the red color of her parasol and the shiny red ribbon around her neck.

Although the woman stands facing you, her head is turned such that she is looking in the 9 o'clock direction. Her body is bent slightly forward and a bit toward the table to her right. She appears lost in thought as though something has just occurred upon which she is ruminating and evaluating, perhaps re-evaluating. Her contemplative attitude, her leaning toward the table and chairs containing the beer, newspaper, and a very masculine

black umbrella lying on the seat of the chair nearest her, could suggest the previous presence and departure of a man, perhaps under conditions that were somewhat unsettling to the woman…The viewer is left to wonder.

APPENDIX D: TRAINING MATERIALS

SENSITIVITY TO BLINDNESS AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS SOLUTION GUIDE

What Are The Basic Points People Should Know About People Who Are Blind Or Visually Impaired?

Speak directly to visitors who are visually impaired, not through a companion.

Words such as "look" and "see" are appropriate as they are a part of everyday language.

Tell the person you are extending your hand to shake his/her hand.

Speak about a person with a visual disability by first referring to the person and then to the disability (a person who is blind**).**

What Should People Know About Sighted Guide Technique?

Identify yourself to offer sighted guide assistance. First, ask the person if they would like sighted guide assistance.

If your assistance is accepted, allow the person you are guiding to reach for your arm. To do so tap the back of your hand against the hand of the person you are guiding. The person will then grasp your arm directly above the elbow.

Relax and walk at a comfortable normal pace. Stay one step ahead of the person you are guiding, except at the top and bottom of stairs and to cross streets. At these places pause and stand alongside of the person you guide. Then resume travel by walking one step ahead of the person you are guiding. Always pause when you change directions, step up or step down.

To guide a person who uses a long cane, do not interfere with the cane's operation.

It is helpful, but not necessary, to tell the person you are guiding about changes in terrain, stairs, narrow spaces, elevators, and escalators.

As you move through the room, let the visitor take your arm. Keep your arm in a relaxed "L" shape near your body or down by your side. Remember—someone who is visually impaired will be following the motion of your arm, so try to avoid jerking or swinging motions.

While moving through the room, let the visitor know which direction you will be taking (to the right or left). Someone who is visually impaired will not know where "over there" is if you are pointing.

When you stop to look at an object, let the visitor know that you are stopping.

When you are ready to proceed, let the visitor know to take your arm.
Don't let a congested location deter you from that location. Simply let the visitor know if you will be moving through "traffic." It can be helpful to move your arm behind your back as you navigate through a crowd or tight space. This enables the person to maintain contact while narrowing the required width of the travel path from "side-by-side" to "single file."

Should you be called away, tell the visitor where to wait and when you will return.

If you are not sure whether a person needs help, JUST ASK!!

What Should People Know About Dog Guides?

<u>If the visitor is accompanied by a dog guide:</u>

Ask the dog guide's name.

Dog guides are working dogs, **so don't pet them or feed them**.

Some people will permit you to pet their dog when he/she is not working and the harness is off, but it is important to ask.

What Do People Need To Know About Describing Objects?

85% of all learning comes to people through visual communication.

<u>To describe an object:</u>

Think about what you would want to know about an object.

There is no "right" way to describe information--so relax!!

If you can, place the object in the visitors hand or place his/her hand on the object.

Start by saying what the object actually is and then add descriptions (color, shape, size, etc.).

Use everyday language.

Don't worry about the exact size of an object.

Use good descriptive terms such as fire engine red, sunshine yellow and soft pink.

Words such as "look" and "see" are appropriate as they are a part of everyday language. Ask yourself—would I be able to picture this object based on the description I just gave?

For more information, contact:

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Whitney Gregory
Executive Director
Visual Aid Volunteers
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